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FROM THE NILE
TO THE RHONE
AND BEYOND

Studies in Early Monastic Literature
and Scriptural Interpretation

ROMA 2012

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FOREWORD

This book gathers together in one place the fruits of a lifetime of reading, teaching and scholarly research by Fr. Mark Sheridan OSB, Rector Emeritus of Sant' Anselmo in Rome. The very title itself, backed up by a quick glance at the table of contents, reveals that his scholarly interests are anything but narrow. They span the entire Mediterranean world – the declining Roman Empire in the West along with the burgeoning Byzantine Empire in the East – a period designated «Late Antiquity» by contemporary historians.

However, it is not hard to tell where Fr. Mark's real interests lie. He is concerned primarily with three areas of thought: the various Patristic methods of interpreting Holy Scripture in the elaboration and defense of a coherent and credible presentation of the Christian faith; the defining role of Origen as master builder in this intellectual cathedral; and the enduringly significant understanding of early monastic theology and praxis formulated by St. John Cassian. Each one of these areas of research, to which Fr. Mark has made original, penetrating and critical contributions, has had enormous significance in Christian spiritual and intellectual history.

The place and meaning of Holy Scripture in a religion claiming, as Christianity does, to be revealed, is, as Newman observed a question of the first rank. But equally important is the need to bring the principles of scriptural interpretation developed by the Fathers into creative dialogue with critical post-Enlightenment and post-Modern methods of exegesis, which often, at least initially, appear foreign to the *phronema* or mindset of the Fathers themselves. However before beginning such a task one must have thoroughly digested those principles in their original context, if sweeping generalizations and false dichotomies are to be avoided. Fr. Mark has done that and is therefore in a position to begin such a dialogue with modernity and with its recent unraveling. The sections of the book where he conducts the discussion are among its most interesting and useful parts: they should be obligatory reading for all theologians who invoke Scripture to establish or defend a position of thought.

Of the importance of Origen in this whole area of Early Christianity it is impossible to exaggerate. Just as Augustine literally formed the essential language and thought patterns of Western Christianity, so the great catechist and exegete

of Alexandria and Antioch gave to the Christian East its distinctive intellectual rhythms and modes of discourse – and also many of its problems! It may not be entirely correct to suggest that Byzantine theology was merely a footnote to Origen, but it is disconcerting when examining a theme in later Byzantine thought to discover – as one so often does – that it had already at least been raised, if not already thoroughly handled, in Late Antique Egypt. Fr. Mark as a true, though critical, lover of Origen's thought, is uniquely equipped to mediate him to a wider public, both scholarly and lay.

The significance of Cassian as a mediator himself of eastern models of monastic life and thought to the Christian West can also hardly be exaggerated. Virtually every single important religious thinker in Western Christianity, up to and including Luther, had been schooled in Cassian's spiritual teaching and there has been a considerable renaissance of scholarship about him in recent years, as evidenced by the work of the *Johannes-Cassian-Stiftung* supported by the Abbey of Münster-schwarzach and by the recent new English and German translations which have appeared. Cassian's role in communicating (and sometimes correcting!) the Origenist theology of Evagrius to the West is naturally a central theme here.

But even more important is the fact that Cassian was, and remains, one of the great teachers of the spiritual life in all forms of monasticism, east and west. As a man with many years of monastic experience himself, Fr. Mark handles Cassian's areas of subtle reflection – the movements of the inner life, the difficulty of attaining interior tranquility and the need for spiritual progress – with the finesse and subtlety such delicate topics deserve. Finally, an underlying theme in all his work is that of his beloved Egypt, not only in Late Antiquity but in the Coptic Church, which remains today one of the great living representatives of historic Oriental Christianity in the world.

I have used the word «mediation» because in this book Fr. Mark mediates between various traditions of life and thought. He is supremely equipped to do that because like both Origen and Cassian he has traversed the Mediterranean – yet has kept his feet firmly placed on the rich soil of monastic tradition. As Abbot of this monastery in Jerusalem, where he has come after so many years of intellectual endeavor and ecclesial service, it is my pleasure to commend this book to its readers and to wish him many more years of creative engagement with the giants of the Christian intellectual tradition and of monastic spirituality.

*Gregory Collins, O.S.B., Abbot
Dormition Abbey Jerusalem*

PREFACE

The title of this collection of essays is meant to reflect the flow of ideas in the ancient world from east to west, especially in the area around the Mediterranean. Two great rivers, the Nile and the Rhone, represent symbolically two cultural poles: Egypt, one of the cradles of civilization in the ancient world, already the repository of ancient wisdom in the eyes of the Greeks, and Gaul, younger but by the fourth century AD already the recipient of eastern influences for over a thousand years. Marseilles, not far from the mouth of the Rhone, had been founded as a Greek colony by 600 BC and Greek may still have been spoken there in the fourth century AD.

The flow of ideas from east to west in the ancient world was particularly true of monasticism, a movement that arose in the East, in Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, then attracted travelers from the West and finally was imitated in the West. Contemporaries were aware of this movement, as is clearly indicated by Athanasius in his preface to the *Life of Antony*, where he mentions the monks from abroad, who had asked him to write about Antony, so that they might have something to take home with them. They seem to have been from the Latin speaking West.

The title reflects also my own particular interests, which include Egyptian monasticism and early Western monasticism, especially that represented by John Cassian and those for whom he wrote in southern Gaul in the early fifth century. Through his writings Egyptian monasticism, or at least the ideal of Egyptian monasticism as he portrayed it, came to influence not only early fifth century monasticism in southern Gaul, but far beyond, indeed all of western monasticism. His works were recommended by the *Rule of Benedict*, which, after the Carolingian monastic reform in the ninth century, came to dominate western monasticism.

The essays gathered here have been written and mostly published during the last twenty years. Many were written upon request for symposia or specialized dictionaries. Some of them overlap. At first glance they may seem to be rather disparate, since they cover a wide range of topics from Coptology to ancient monasticism in Egypt and Gaul to aspects of ancient biblical interpretation to reflections on modern historiography. Indeed I have sometimes been asked with

puzzlement: "what really is your field?" Philology, history, theology, monasticism? These are questions that reflect perhaps more the modern divisions of study than the ancient world that is the object of study. John Cassian would not have understood such questions.

Therefore a word of explanation seems appropriate to explain the connection among these essays. The explanation inevitably involves explaining an intellectual itinerary, which is the result of research and discovery. My encounter with an Egyptian bishop of the late sixth century, or rather with his literary remains, broadened my horizon considerably by introducing me into the world of early Christian exegesis, a world considerably different from that of the modern historical-critical studies in which I had originally been trained. The need and desire to understand the texts of Rufus of Shotep has led me to explore many aspects of ancient interpretation and rhetoric as well as many other pieces of Coptic literature. Scriptural interpretation also played a key role in ancient monasticism, for the study of the biblical texts and their interpretations was the central activity of the early monks. Here too John Cassian provided the earliest summary of the rules of ancient exegesis for Western monasticism, a summary that had wide influence throughout the Latin Middle Ages. The activity of interpreting the Scriptures, developed from rich inheritance of classical interpretation of Homer and the Greek myths, Hellenistic Judaism and the earlier Christian texts, united monks and bishops, the monks because they sought food for the soul and inspiration for contemplation, the bishops because they sought food for their flocks and material for combatting heresy. Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, John Chrysostom, Cyril in Alexandria, Theodoret in Cyrus, were all occupied in composing massive commentaries on the Scriptures, many of which were to be translated into other languages already in antiquity. Most of them knew the works of Philo of Alexandria and all were influenced in one way or another by the most famous of all Christian interpreters, Origen of Alexandria.

The ancient Mediterranean world, together with the countries adjoining those bordering it, was an extraordinarily international and cosmopolitan world, united administratively in the Roman Empire, and linguistically by the Greek language, the *lingua franca* of the intellectual elite of the ancient world, but also a language spoken in all the countries of the Eastern half of the Mediterranean. Earlier it had been the spoken language of the Christian Church in Rome and southern Gaul. This was an age in which it was possible to travel from Romania to Constantinople to Antioch to Jerusalem and then to Egypt, even upper Egypt, speaking Greek. Although the knowledge of Greek, which

had fueled and inspired the development of Latin poetry, prose and rhetoric in an earlier age was beginning to fade in the West, Ambrose was still reading the homilies of Origen and the works of Philo in Greek in Milan to find inspiration for his sermons.

John Cassian is in many ways an outstanding example of this ancient world. Born in Scythia minor (modern Romania), he was educated in Latin literature and philosophy, yet clearly fully conversant in Greek. He traveled as a young man like so many others in the late fourth century to Palestine as a pilgrim, by his own account entered a monastery in Bethlehem, and then was drawn to Egypt by the flourishing monastic culture there that was already famous in the West. He even hints in one place that he had learned Coptic (*Conl.* 16.I) and was able to cite a Coptic phrase. He was keenly aware of the difficulties of translation from one language to another, as had been the grandson of Ben Sirach several centuries earlier, and frequently introduced Greek terms into his Latin text, explaining that there was no corresponding word in Latin.

The fifty year period between 380 and 430 is extraordinary for the number of colorful, gifted personalities, many of them friends at least through their writings if not through direct personal contact, who were contemporaries, even if belonging to different generations. In the East there were the Cappadocians, Gregory Nazianzen and Gregory of Nyssa, the younger brother of Basil (who had died in 379). In Antioch (Syria) there were Diodorus, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus. In Egypt the two Macarii were still alive in 380 along with Didymus the Blind. From Pontus through Constantinople and Jerusalem came Evagrius to settle in the Egyptian desert. John was bishop in Jerusalem and Theophilus in Alexandria, to be followed by his nephew Cyril. In the West Ambrose was bishop in Milan, Damasus in Rome and a little later Augustine was to become bishop in the small North African diocese of Hippo Regius. His literary heritage dominates the Western Church even today. From the West many travelled east: Jerome, Paula, Rufinus, Melania the Younger and later her granddaughter Melania. Then there was the noble lady Egeria from Spain, who left a fascinating account of the holy places. John Cassian and Palladius came to the Holy Land from closer at hand and Cassian ended up in Marseille.

This was also the period in which Christian writers such as Gregory Nazianzen, Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, and many others took over and exploited the heritage of ancient rhetoric, creating a new Christian literary culture. This comes to be reflected also in Coptic literature of the fifth and sixth centuries,

both through translations and through original compositions, as I have tried to show in a few of these essays.

It was also the period just after the great theological struggle against Arianism that had occupied the energies of so many in the middle years of the fourth century, a period that left a questionable heritage in the form of imperial intervention in church affairs that had begun with Constantine. The theological struggles continued, unfortunately, after 430 first against Nestorius, the bishop of Constantinople and then against the Council of Chalcedon of 451, producing an extensive polemical literature in Greek, Coptic, Syriac and Latin. In this John Cassian also took part, having been asked by his friend, the Archdeacon Leo (later to be known as Leo the Great), to compose a response to Nestorius, who had denied the propriety of using the term «Mother of God». Leo later used Cassian's treatise *De Incarnatione Domini* in composing his own *Letter to Flavian* (also known as the *Tome of Leo*), which itself became the object of bitter controversy.

Whoever interests himself in this world is inevitably led to questions of historiography, that is, the history of the way the human past has been reconstructed. What was until several decades ago described as «decline and fall» under the influence of Gibbon is now described, due to the work of Peter Brown, Averil Cameron, and many others, as the world of «late antiquity», a rich and culturally varied world, but possessing a certain unity. It was a culture enhanced through travel and multilingualism, and the confluence of ideas from many different sources. To appreciate it, one must employ the tools of philology, and to have an interest in the history of ideas, theology, philosophy and historiography.

It remains for me to express my gratitude to the many people who have contributed in one way or another to the writing and research reflected in these essays. My thanks are due in particular to my many students and colleagues from all parts of the world at Sant'Anselmo and at the Patristic Institute «Augustinianum» in Rome. My inability to answer the question of a student to my own satisfaction has often led me to explore new areas. My special thanks are due to my longtime assistant, Miloš Vojár, for the painstaking task of converting the various styles in which the essays were originally published into something approaching uniformity. Some effort has been made to correct errors in the original publications, and to add more recent bibliography. The errors that remain are entirely my own responsibility.

ABBREVIATIONS

The abbreviations of biblical books are those used by the *Journal of Biblical Literature*.

ABBREVIATIONS OF THE WORKS OF ORIGEN

The abbreviations used for the works of Origen are those found in *Origeniana Quinta*, ed. R.J. Daly, Leuven 1992.

<i>HomGn</i>	<i>Homilies on Genesis</i>
<i>HomEx</i>	<i>Homilies on Exodus</i>
<i>HomLev</i>	<i>Homilies on Leviticus</i>
<i>HomNum</i>	<i>Homilies on Numbers</i>
<i>HomJos</i>	<i>Homilies on Joshua</i>
<i>HomJd</i>	<i>Homilies on Judges</i>
<i>Hom 1R (1S)</i>	<i>Homilies on 1 Kings (1 Samuel)</i>
<i>HomPs</i>	<i>Homilies on the Psalms</i>
<i>HomCt</i>	<i>Homilies on the Canticle of Canticles</i>
<i>HomIs</i>	<i>Homilies on Isaiah</i>
<i>HomJr</i>	<i>Homilies on Jeremiah</i>
<i>HomEz</i>	<i>Homilies on Ezechiel</i>
<i>HomLs</i>	<i>Homilies on Lamentations</i>
<i>HomLc</i>	<i>Homilies on Luke</i>
<i>SelGn</i>	<i>Selecta on Genesis</i>
<i>ComCt</i>	<i>Commentary on the Canticle of Canticles</i>
<i>ComMt</i>	<i>Commentary on Matthew</i>
<i>ComJn</i>	<i>Commentary on John</i>
<i>ComRm</i>	<i>Commentary on Romans</i>
<i>PArch</i>	<i>Peri Archon - De Principiis</i>
<i>CCels</i>	<i>Contra Celsum</i>
<i>Philoc</i>	<i>Philocalia</i>

<i>SerMt</i>	<i>Sermon on the Mount</i>
<i>FragmMt</i>	<i>Fragments on Matthew</i>
<i>FragmJn</i>	<i>Fragments on John</i>

ABBREVIATIONS USED FOR PHILONIC TREATISES

The abbreviations used for the works of Philo are those used in D.T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey*, (Compendium Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum), Minneapolis/Assen 1993, xv.

<i>Abr.</i>	<i>De Abrahamo</i>
<i>Aet.</i>	<i>De aeternitate mundi</i>
<i>Agr.</i>	<i>De agricultura</i>
<i>Anim.</i>	<i>De animalibus</i>
<i>Cher.</i>	<i>De Cherubim</i>
<i>Contempl.</i>	<i>De vita contemplativa</i>
<i>Conf.</i>	<i>De confusione linguarum</i>
<i>Congr.</i>	<i>De congressu eruditionis gratia</i>
<i>Decal.</i>	<i>De Decalogo</i>
<i>Det.</i>	<i>Quod deterius potiori insidiari soleat</i>
<i>Deus</i>	<i>Quod Deus ist immutabilis</i>
<i>Ebr.</i>	<i>De ebrietate</i>
<i>Flacc.</i>	<i>In Flaccum</i>
<i>Fug.</i>	<i>De fuga et invectione</i>
<i>Gig.</i>	<i>De gigantibus</i>
<i>Her.</i>	<i>Quis rerum divinarum heres sit</i>
<i>Ios.</i>	<i>De Iosepho</i>
<i>Leg.</i>	<i>Legum allegoriae</i>
<i>Legat.</i>	<i>Legatio ad Gaium</i>
<i>Migr.</i>	<i>De migratione Abrahami</i>
<i>Mos.</i>	<i>De vita Moysis</i>
<i>Mut.</i>	<i>De mutatione nominum</i>
<i>Opif.</i>	<i>De opificio mundi</i>
<i>Plant.</i>	<i>De plantatione</i>

<i>Post.</i>	<i>De posteritate Caini</i>
<i>Praem.</i>	<i>De praemiis et poenis, De execrationibus</i>
<i>QE</i>	<i>Questiones et solutiones in Exodum</i>
<i>QG</i>	<i>Questiones et solutiones in Genesim</i>
<i>Sacr.</i>	<i>De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini</i>
<i>Sobr.</i>	<i>De sobrietate</i>
<i>Somn.</i>	<i>De somniis</i>
<i>Spec.</i>	<i>De specialibus legibus</i>

ABBREVIATIONS OF GREEK AND LATIN WORKS

Ambrose

<i>Abr.</i>	<i>De Abraham</i>
<i>Exp. Luc.</i>	<i>Expositio euangelii secundum Lucam</i>
<i>Exp. Ps. 118</i>	<i>Expositio Psalmi CXVIII</i>
<i>Jac.</i>	<i>De Iacob et vita beata</i>

Athanasius

<i>Vit. Ant.</i>	<i>Vita Antonii (Life of Antony)</i>
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Augustine

<i>Civ.</i>	<i>De civitate Dei</i>
<i>Doctr. chr.</i>	<i>De doctrina christiana</i>
<i>Enarrat. Ps.</i>	<i>Enarrationes in Psalmos</i>
<i>Tract. Ev. Jo.</i>	<i>In Evangelium Johannis tractatus</i>

Aulus Gellius

<i>Noct. att.</i>	<i>Noctes atticae</i>
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Clement of Alexandria

<i>Paed.</i>	<i>Paedagogus</i>
<i>Strom.</i>	<i>Stromata</i>

Cicero

<i>Tusc.</i>	<i>Tusculanae disputationes</i>
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Eusebius of Caesarea

<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
<i>Prep. evang.</i>	<i>Preparatio evangelica</i>
<i>Dem. evang.</i>	<i>Demonstratio evangelica</i>
<i>Comm. Ps.</i>	<i>Commentarius in Psalmos</i>

Gennadius

<i>Vir. ill.</i>	<i>De viris illustribus</i>
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Irenaeus

<i>Adv. Haer.</i>	<i>Adversus Haereses</i>
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Jerome

<i>Adv. Iov.</i>	<i>Adversos Iovinianum</i>
<i>Dial. contra Pelag.</i>	<i>Dialogi contra Pelagianos libri iii</i>
<i>Comm. Gal.</i>	<i>Commentariorum in Epistolam ad Galatas libri III</i>
<i>Comm. in Esaiam</i>	<i>Commentarii in Esaiam</i>
<i>Comm. in Ezech.</i>	<i>Commentarii in Ezechielem</i>
<i>Comm. Matt.</i>	<i>Commentarii in Euangelium Matthaei</i>
<i>Epist.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>
<i>Vir. ill.</i>	<i>De viris illustribus</i>

John Cassian

<i>Inst.</i>	<i>Institutiones (Institutes)</i>
<i>Conl.</i>	<i>Conlationes (Conferences)</i>

John Chrysostom

<i>Hom. Gen.</i>	<i>Homiliae in Genesim</i>
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Palladius

<i>Hist. Laus.</i>	<i>Historia Lausiaca</i>
<i>Dialog.</i>	<i>Dialogus de vita Iohannis Chrysostomi</i>

Ps. Clement

<i>Rec. Clem.</i>	<i>Clementine Recognitions</i>
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Rufinus of Aquileia – Socrates (Scholasticus) – Sozomen
Hist. eccles. *Historia ecclesiastica*

Seneca
Dial. *Dialogi*
Ep. *Epistulae morales*
Ira *De Ira*
Ben. *De beneficiis*

Sulpicius Severus
Dial. *Dialogorum 1. ii*

Tertullian
Marc. *Adversus Marcionem*

ABBREVIATIONS OF SERIES

ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
BMus	Bibliothèque du Muséon
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
CCL	Corpus Christianorum Latinorum
CPG	Clavis Patrum Graecorum
FC	Fathers of the Church
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Church
PL	Migne, Patrologia Latina
PG	Migne, Patrologia Graeca
PO	Patrologia Orientalis
SCh	Sources Chrétiennes
SEAug	Studia ephemeridis Augustinianum
SA	Studia anselmiana
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

MANUSCRIPTS

- Vat. Copt. Vatican Library manuscript: A. HEBBELYNCK - A. VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Codices Coptici Vaticani Barberiniani Borgiani Rosiani 1-2*, Roma 1937-1947.
- M(MSS) Morgan Library manuscript: L. DEPUYDT, *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library* (Corpus of Illuminated Manuscripts 4-5), Leuven 1993.
- PN Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale: M.E. PORCHER, «Analyse des manuscrits coptes 131.1 8 de la Bibliothèque Nationale avec indication des textes bibliques», *Revue d’Egyptologie* 1-2 (1933-1936).

PART I
FROM THE NILE

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTERIOR LIFE IN CERTAIN EARLY MONASTIC WRITINGS IN EGYPT¹

Almost a century ago the distinguished German scholar Karl Holl published an essay on the subject of Greek monasticism in which he noted that church historians, not to mention profane ones, had not treated Greek monasticism in a very favorable light.² He went on to note that, if one is to appreciate monasticism, it must be in the area of the inner spiritual life. Taking as his point of departure the *Vita Antonii* of Athanasius, he pointed out that it is precisely the development of the interior life that the author set out to portray in this basic model for all Greek monasticism. Antony's goal is to achieve inner perfection so that he might be worthy of the kingdom of heaven. To achieve this he begins first to attend to himself in the vicinity of his native village, trying to acquire the virtues he sees in others and seeking communion with God through prayer. There follows the lengthy struggle with temptations and demons until he acquires peace of heart. It is a life entirely dedicated to inner healing, a life of self-denial and self-discipline through which the soul becomes free so that she may constantly enjoy the contemplation of God. This is the ideal, Holl concludes, presented by the *Vita Antonii*.³ The portrait of Antony's spiritual development offered by Athanasius and of his consequent role in the society as counsellor, consoler, and healer, asserts Holl, is in no way legendary but is confirmed by reliable historical reports on all sides.⁴

1 This essay was originally published in *The Spirituality of Ancient Monasticism: Acts of the International Colloquium Cracow-Tyniec, 16-19.11.1994*, ed. M. Starowieyski, Cracovia 1995, 91-104.

2 K. HOLL, «Über das griechische Mönchtum» in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte* 2, Tübingen 1928, 270-282. The essay was originally published in 1898.

3 HOLL, «Über das griechische Mönchtum», 271.

4 HOLL, «Über das griechische Mönchtum», 274. In the intervening years much has been written on the question of the historical value of the details to be found in the *Vita Antonii*. See among others: K. HEUSSI, *Der Ursprung des Mönchtums*, Tübingen 1936, 87-108; H. DÖRRIES, «Die Vita Antonii als Geschichtsquelle» in *Wort und Stunde. Erster Band. Gesammelte Studien zur Kirchengeschichte des vierten Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen 1966, 145-

During the past hundred years many other explanations for the origins of monasticism have been offered and many attempts have been made to find a unity in the apparently diverse forms and practices of ancient monasticism. Space and time prohibit us from reviewing them all here. However, a few are worth mentioning as a framework for the examination of some early monastic texts.

In an interesting essay on the question of the origins of monasticism published forty years ago, W. Schneemelcher raised the question of whether the decisive impulse and pre-history of monasticism should be seen as coming from outside of Christianity or whether it should be seen as a phenomenon of inner church development.⁵ He rejected the former, including influences coming from Qumran, and then raised the question as to whether the development of monasticism in the church should be regarded primarily as a response to new conditions in the church of the fourth century, such as the increasing influence of the state in the church, or whether it should best be seen as a result of the development of Alexandrian theology.

He concluded that the external conditions of the times could not explain the rise of monasticism. Much more important was the fact that the ascetic way of life was seen as that recommended by the Bible. The theological ground for this had been prepared by the great Alexandrian theologians Clement and especially Origen whose influence, transmitted through many channels, had left such a stamp upon Christian thinking that people were seized by it and driven into the desert.⁶

According to A. Guillaumont, an inner coherence in the monastic movement can be perceived if one views it in terms of the quest for interior unity.⁷ The ideal of achieving unity in one's life, of consecrating oneself entirely to the service of God, is rooted in the Bible but also converges with the hellenic theory of unification found in Plato, Plotinus and gnostic systems. Viewed from the perspective of the search for interior unity, the other principal monastic elements, celi-

224; A. GUILLAUMONT, «Antony of Egypt» in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, New York 1991, 148-150; *Vie d'Antoine* (SCh 400), ed. G.J.M. Bartelink, Paris 1994. As Bartelink (p. 42) notes, it is practically impossible to detach the facts from the ideas of Athanasius.

5 W. SCHNEEMELCHER, «Erwägungen zu dem Ursprung des Mönchtums in Aegypten», in *Christentum am Nil*, ed. K. Wessel, Recklinghausen 1964, 131-141.

6 SCHNEEMELCHER, «Erwägungen zu dem Ursprung des Mönchtums in Aegypten», 140.

7 A. GUILLAUMONT, «Esquisse d'une phénoménologie du monachisme» in *Aux origines du Monachisme chrétien: Pour une phénoménologie du monachisme* (Spiritualité Orientale 30), Bégrolles-en-Mauges 1979, 228-239.

bacy, renouncement and *anachoresis*, emerge through a kind of internal logic or exigence. The choice of celibacy is based on the desire to be undivided by cares, as counseled by St. Paul (1 Cor 7:32ff.). But celibacy can also be viewed as an aspect of that fundamental monastic option, renunciation (ἀποτάξις) of the world and all that constitutes the secular life. *Anachoresis* follows as the desire to put a distance between oneself and what one has renounced. Guillaumont notes that the exterior forms of monasticism can be very diverse and indeed, even strange, but the end pursued is always the same, interior unification. This he sees as the essence of monasticism, the desire for a unified interior life, devoid of all division. The texts to which he appeals to support this view are principally from the Greek world, the *Vita Antonii*, Evagrius, Basil, Isaiah, and pseudo-Macarius but the idea is to be found in the Syriac speaking monastic world as well.

On the other hand, a quite different version of early Coptic monasticism has been offered by T. Baumeister.⁸ After excluding from consideration the *Vita Antonii* on the ground that it presents the theology of Athanasius rather than a reliable biography of Antony, and the letters of Antony on the grounds that their attribution to Antony is uncertain, he concentrates his attention on the *apophthemata* attributed to Antony as the chief and most reliable source for discovering the historical Antony and his «mentality». We shall not pause here to discuss this very dubious methodology but only to note the results of the investigation.⁹ Baumeister comes to the conclusion that for Antony there is no question of searching for a deeper sense of the Scriptures in the sense of Alexandrian allegory. The attitude of Antony has nothing to do with the conscious search for perfection of one who is detached from earthly things or to the basic notion of steps of spiritual progress. The way of life of Antony and his spiritual attitude should be understood rather as one of the possible forms of religiosity of the people of the countryside influenced by general Christian *askesis*. What the latter might be is not specified. The anchorites brought their wisdom of life (*Lebensweisheit*) to the desert and exchanged their new experiences with one another. Out of this slowly develops a spirituality and a way of life based on the

8 T. BAUMEISTER, «Die Mentalität des frühen ägyptischen Mönchtums. Zur Frage der Ursprünge des christlichen Mönchtums», *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 88 (1977) 145-160.

9 In his review of HEUSSI, *Der Ursprung des Mönchtums*, Lefort had already offered incisive criticism of this approach. See L.-TH. LEFORT, in *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 33 (1937) 341-348. For a different analysis of the *apophthemata* regarding Antony, see S. RUBENSON, *The Letters of St. Antony. Origenist Theology, Monastic Tradition and the Making of a Saint* (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity), Minneapolis 1995, 159-160.

alternation of prayer and work. From Scripture they found directions for the anchoritic life.

By excluding from consideration also in the Pachomian literature those things which manifest an Alexandrian spiritual theology and an interest in allegorical exegesis, on the basis that they are later developments, Baumeister is able to paint a similar picture of early Pachomian monasticism.¹⁰ In this literature the notion of the monastic life as «*bios angelikos*» plays no significant role and this shows an important difference from a monastic spirituality with a Hellenistic stamp. Rather, based on the ecclesiological assertions in the Scriptures, a whole theology of the community was developed in which, using biblical images, the latter is portrayed as the church in miniature.¹¹ Baumeister's conclusion is that it is wrong to trace the beginnings of Egyptian monasticism back to Alexandrian theology. In both cases, those of Antony and Pachomius, what we encounter is rather a simple spirituality that grew up among the people of the countryside without traces of a theology of seeking perfection or of allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures.¹²

In the light of these sharply contrasting pictures of early Egyptian monasticism it may be useful to examine in detail some recently published Coptic monastic literature, which has so far not received much attention. These are the fragments of the works of Paul of Tamma.¹³ According to the editor, Orlandi, they should be dated to the first half of the fourth century, that is, contemporary with Antony and Pachomius. The works consist in a «letter», a work entitled «the cell» (the ms. calls it the «letter on the cell»), a work on «judgement» (*diakrisis*) of which there remains only the subscription, and short works concerned with poverty and humility. Orlandi places Paul along with other figures such as Apollo, Phib, and Anup in the area between Memphis and Shmun. Paul is the only one whose works, as distinct from an account of his life, have been preserved.¹⁴ He is known also from accounts of his life in the *Synaxarion*. This

10 BAUMEISTER, «Die Mentalität des frühen ägyptischen Mönchtums», 154-155. His principal source here is the *Liber Horsiesii*.

11 BAUMEISTER, «Die Mentalität des frühen ägyptischen Mönchtums», 157.

12 BAUMEISTER, «Die Mentalität des frühen ägyptischen Mönchtums», 158.

13 T. ORLANDI, *Paolo di Tamma. Opere, Introduzione, Testo, Traduzione e Concordanze*, Roma 1988. The references to these works that follow are according to the titles and numbers given by Orlandi in this edition.

14 The works are preserved in fragments of manuscripts dating from the sixth century from the monastery of Apa Jeremias and from the ninth/tenth centuries from the White Monastery. This suggests fairly wide diffusion. See ORLANDI, *Paolo di Tamma*, 3-10.

personage and these works are of considerable interest precisely because, as in the case also of Shenute, the Greek and Latin tradition has preserved no memory of them. Even if it should be necessary to date them later in the fourth century, they are precious testimony to what the monks themselves thought about their spiritual goals, about the meaning of their life, and what they taught their disciples.

The literary form of these works is that of monastic exhortations, similar to the letters of Antony, of Ammon, and of Pachomius, Theodore and Horsiesi. There does not appear to be any principle of organization in the subjects treated in these works and certainly no attempt to treat of the spiritual life systematically. Since this is the case, we shall not attempt to give a complete view of the doctrine of Paul but only to note the elements that his teaching has in common with the other monastic traditions.

The fundamental attitude of attention to oneself (προσοχή) and vigilance (νήσις) is abundantly attested in these documents.¹⁵ Paul admonishes his readers to be like pilots at the helm of their ships, watching to see from which direction the wind is coming, whether it is favorable or not.¹⁶ He uses both the Greek word νήφειν (ΝΗΦΗ in Coptic) and the Coptic ΡΟΕΙC to urge his readers to vigilance¹⁷ while they are seated in their cells. Related to this is also the counsel to guard oneself (ΖΑΡΕΖ) which is the equivalent of the Greek φυλάσσειν. This is used also in the sense of «keeping» or «observing» the commandments, the covenant, etc.¹⁸ Paul also urges his readers not to be relaxed or careless while they are in this world. The verb used in this case is probably to be understood as the negative equivalent of the admonition to be «attentive to oneself» in Greek (πρόσεχε σεαυτῷ).¹⁹

Closely related to this attitude of attention or vigilance is the question of the quality and the nature of one's thoughts. Paul urges the monk not to give rest

15 For this vocabulary in other monastic literature, see P. MIQUEL, *Lexique du desert: Etude de quelques mots-clés du vocabulaire monastique grec ancien*, Bégrolles-en-Mauges 1986, 191-198 and R. VERNAY, «Attention», in *Dictionnaire de la Spiritualité* 1, Paris 1937, 1058-1077.

16 *Opus sine titulo*, 100.

17 *Opus sine titulo*, 109, 110.

18 *De Cella* 62, *De humilitate* 21 quoting Prov 4:23 ΖΕΝ ΖΑΡΕΖ ΝΙΜ ΕΚΕΖΑΡΕΖ ΕΠΕ-ΚΖΗΤ·

19 *De Cella* 6, 8.

to his thoughts: «Let them be dead, while you live in the things of God».²⁰ He also uses the Greek word λογισμός (in Coptic: ΛΟΓΙΣΜΟΣ) to designate the false, deceptive or empty thoughts to be guarded against, among which is mentioned vainglory.²¹ No doubt the favorable and unfavorable winds mentioned above in reference to the vigilance of the pilot are to be understood as thoughts or passions. Paul also tells his readers, «If you chase all evil thoughts from your heart, your whole body will be light and your thoughts will remain on the height of virtue».²²

The struggle with the thoughts is also described as a contest, the goal of which is «purity of heart». Paul tells his readers: «While seated in your cell, persevere in your prayers and in your fasting and in the contest (ΑΓΩΝ) of your heart so that you will remain in the condition of purity of heart».²³ The word ΑΓΩΝ (contest) is undoubtedly a reference to the pastoral letters²⁴ and is a common term in the monastic literature to describe what is known as the active or practical life which has as its goal purity of heart. This goal is also described as passionlessness (ἀπάθεια), a word Paul comes close to using in another context where he states that «poverty and need are what remain from passion (παθος) and freedom from care for these things is what heals a man».²⁵ The word translated here as «freedom from care» (ΜΝΤΑΤΡΟΟΥϞ) is almost certainly the equivalent of the Greek ἀμεριμνία, another technical term in the Greek ascetical vocabulary.²⁶

Paul urges his readers also to seek interior peace or tranquillity. Keep the commandments of God, he says, «walk in poverty and in a life which is light and without cares (ΜΝΤΑΤΡΟΟΥϞ) and in need so that you may be tranquil».²⁷ The Coptic term used here (ΕΚΜΟΤΕΝ) is the equivalent of the the Greek ἀνάπαυσις, found in Matt. 11:29. Paul also quotes Matt. 11:28, «Come to me...

20 *Epistula* 3.

21 *De Cella* 100.

22 *De humilitate* 22.

23 *Opus sine titulo* 117. The word ΑΓΩΝ is found also in *De Cella* 35.

24 Cf. 1 Tim 4:10; 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7.

25 *De paupertate* 3.

26 See MIQUEL, *Lexique du desert*, 49-65 for other references. The word is found in 1 Cor 7:32 where Paul is urging his readers to remain celibate so that they may be without cares (ἀμεριμνους). The Coptic (Sahidic) translation gives: ΑΤΡΟΟΥϞ.

27 *De Paupertate* 2.

and I will give you repose».²⁸ The Coptic equivalent of the other Greek term for peace (ἡσυχία), is also found in these works. Paul tells his readers that the demons engage in combat openly with a man in the desert. They have no mercy towards a man who sits alone in peace (ΖΗΝΟΥCΘΡΕΖΤ)²⁹ He also urges his disciples not to multiply their thoughts so that they may remain quiet (ΕΚCΘΡΑΖΤ) and unconfused.³⁰

These works are saturated with Scriptural citations and allusions. It is therefore no surprise that Paul also recommends the practice of meditation, that is, the recitation of the Scriptures, and reading. To back up the practice of meditation he quotes Ps 38:4 «fire will burn in my meditation» (ΤΑΜΕΛΕΤΑ) and Ps 118:92 «If your law was not my meditation, I would perish in my lowliness». To urge the practice of reading, he cites 1 Tim 4:13 «Attend to reading until I come».³¹

It is clear from the elliptical way in which Scripture is often cited that Paul presumes an extensive and precise acquaintance with the text of the Bible on the part of his readers and also with spiritual interpretations of the texts. For example, in the letter concerning the cell of the monk, he says that the poor man who is humble will be called «Josedek among the prophets». The citation comes from Jeremiah 23 where the name Josedek is the last word in verse 6 and the phrase «among the prophets» the first words of verse 9. Verses 7 and 8 of the Hebrew text are missing in the Septuagint. The citation is unintelligible, however, unless one knows that the name Josedek (and precisely in this phrase) had already been interpreted to mean «righteousness» (δικαιοσύνη) or «the just of God» (οἱ τοῦ θεοῦ δίκαιοι). The precise citation and the interpretation can be found in both Eusebius and Didymus of Alexandria.³² This obviously suggests contact with the Alexandrian exegetical tradition.

28 *Opus sine titulo* 215. †NΔ† ΕΥΜΤΟΝ ΝΗΤΝ = ἀναπαύσω ὑμᾶς.

29 *De Cella* 61.

30 *De paupertate* 4. For the equivalence with the Greek ἡσυχία, see W. CRUM, *A Coptic Dictionary*, Oxford 1939, 389b.

31 *De humilitate* 12-14. For the meaning of ΜΕΛΕΤΑ as recitation, see See H. BACHT, *Das Vermächtnis des Ursprungs: Studien zum frühen Mönchtum I*, Würzburg 1972, Exkurs IV: «“Meditatio” in den ältesten Mönchsquellen», 244-264 and D. BURTON-CHRISTIE, *The Word and the Desert*, Oxford 1992, 122-129.

32 See EUSEBIUS, *Dem. evang.*, 7,3,49, ed. I.A. Heikel, *Eusebius Werke* 6 (GCS 23), Leipzig 1913, 349: «καὶ τοῦτο τὸ ὄνομα ὃ καλέσει αὐτοὺς κύριος, Ἰωσεδεκειμ ἐν τοῖς προφήταις». μεταλαμβάνεται δέ, ὡς ἔφην, τοῦνομα εἰς τὴν Ἑλλήνων φωνὴν «οἱ τοῦ θεοῦ δίκαιοι», and L. DOUTRELEAU, *Didyme l'Aveugle sur Zacharie*, 2, 27 (Sch 84) Paris 1962, 440 §27:

Another example is to be found in the brief work called the «Letter of Apa Paul» where he states that now is the time to bear with temptations since, according to Jas 1:12, «the perfect and the blessed will receive the crown of life». Then he continues, «because you have worked at this, my son, you have become the beloved of the unicorn». The reference is to Ps 28:6. The meaning is certainly obscure. A possible explanation is to be found in Eusebius' commentary on the Psalm where he understands the «beloved» to be Jerusalem.³³ As is well known, Jerusalem was commonly held to be a figure of the individual soul and, as such, the dwelling place of God. This seems to be the sense also of another passage where Paul exhorts the reader not to follow his desires and then quotes Joel 3:17 to the effect that «the heavenly Jerusalem will be for you a holy city . . . and Egypt will be in ruin», that is, says Paul, «your enemies, and the Lord will dwell in Sion».³⁴ The meaning seems to be that the Lord will dwell in the soul where the desires have been expelled. Egypt was commonly held to represent the human body as the seat of the passions.³⁵ That this is the sense here is confirmed by another passage where Paul says, «Do not put your body in the cell while your heart is in Egypt, but make your body a temple of God and direct your thoughts that you may acquire a sound way of thinking».³⁶

Paul also describes the monk or anchorite (the terms are used synonymously and in parallel)³⁷ seated in his cell as «the incense of God» and «the altar of God» (ΘΥΣΙΑΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ)³⁸, clearly allegorical applications of these institutions that are found earlier in Philo and Origen.³⁹ Similar is the statement that the

Οἱ γενάμενοι πολλοὶ στέεφανοι ἐκ τῶν νοητῶν χρυσοῦ καὶ ἀργύρου ἐπιτίθενται τῇ Ἰησοῦ κεφαλῇ, τοῦ τῆς δικαιοσύνης, — τὸ γὰρ Ἰωσεδέκ εἰς τὸ «δικαιοσύνη» μεταλαμβάνεται ἐκ τῆς ἐβραϊκῆς εἰς τὴν ἑλλάδα φωνήν.

33 EUSEBIUS, *Comm. Ps.*, (PG 23, 256): καὶ λεπτυνεῖ αὐτὰς ὡς τὸν μόσχον τοῦ Λιβάνου καὶ ὁ ἡγαπημένος ὡς υἱὸς μονοκερώτων. Ἡ καὶ οὕτως· Μόσχον ἔοικε Λιβάνου, τὸν υἱὸν μονοκερώτων, τὴν Ἱερουσαλὴμ λέγειν, καὶ τὸν πάλαι ἡγαπημένον υἱὸν μονοκερώτων.

34 *De humilitate* 24.

35 The interpretation of Egypt as signifying the body or the passions of the body goes back at least to Philo of Alexandria. See *Congr.* 20. It is found also in ORIGEN, *HomGn.* 15,4.

36 *Opus sine titulo* 11-12.

37 *De Cella* 36-37.

38 *De Cella* 52-53.

39 See PHILO, *Spec.* 1.287.3: τὰ μὲν ῥητὰ ταῦτα [σύμβολα νοητῶν], τὰ δὲ πρὸς διάνοιαν τοῖς τῆς ἀλληγορίας κανόνσιν ἐπισκεπτέον· πρὸς ἀλήθειαν τοῦ θεοῦ θυσιαστήριόν ἐστιν ἡ εὐχάριστος τοῦ σοφοῦ ψυχῇ παγεῖσα ἐκ τελειῶν ἀρετῶν ἀτμήτων καὶ ἀδιαιρέτων· and ORIGEN, *CCels* 8.17: οὐχ ὥρῶν ὅτι βωμοὶ μὲν εἰσιν ἡμῖν τὸ ἐκάστου τῶν δικαίων ἡγεμονικόν, ἀφ' οὗ ἀναπέμπεται ἀληθῶς καὶ νοητῶς εὐδὴ «θυμιάματα», «προσευχαί» ἀπὸ συνειδήσεως καθαρᾶς.

«true and perfect tabernacle» is the wise man in his cell, in which «there is the golden vase with the manna in it and the rod of Aaron which blossomed and the tablets of the covenant» (Heb 9:4).⁴⁰ This is considerably less obscure if one is acquainted with the allegorical interpretation given by Origen in which the golden urn containing the manna represents the treasure of the word of God and the tablets of the covenant signify the word of God written in the heart, using the interpretation already offered by Paul the Apostle in 2 Cor 3:3 and Rom 2:15.⁴¹ Paul of Tamma (as well as Origen) seems to presume the principle of interpreting Scripture by means of Scripture.

A more complicated exegetical tradition may lie behind the obscure admonition to guard oneself «on the right».⁴² A similar idea is found in a passage in a Catechesis attributed to Pachomius where the author says that «To you the demons come from the right, while to all other men they clearly come from the left».⁴³ The explanation for this may be found in a homily of Origen on Psalm 15 where he explains that the just man does not have a left. He supports this by citing several other Scripture passages including Exod 17:12 where it is said that Aaron and Ur stood not «on the right and on the left» of Moses but «on one side and the other». The judge Aoth (Judg 3:15) is also cited because he is said to have been *amphoterodexios*, that is, taken literally, provided with two right hands.⁴⁴ The immediate textual background to the text of Paul of Tamma, however, is probably Zachariah 3:1 where it is said of the Lord that «the devil was standing at his right to make war against him». Didymus of Alexandria offers an explanation of this in his commentary on Zachariah, explaining that the devil stands at the right with a hostile intention when he tries to lay claim to those who are called to the faith and to other virtues.⁴⁵

A more attentive reading of these texts would undoubtedly reveal many more contacts with the previous exegetical tradition, specifically with that tradi-

40 PAUL OF TAMMA, *De Cella* 67-68.

41 See ORIGEN, *HomNum.* X,3. A similar interpretation may be found in CASSIAN, *Conl.* 14, X, 2-3.

42 PAUL OF TAMMA, *De Cella* 62.

43 *Catechesis* 56. The Coptic text and a French translation may be found in *Oeuvres de S. Pachôme et de ses disciples* (CSCO 159, 160), tr. L.-TH. LEFORT, Louvain 1956. See A. VEILLEUX, *Pachomian Koinonia* 3, Kalamazoo, Mich. 1982, 2, for a discussion of the attribution to Pachomius and an English translation, p. 39.

44 See ORIGENE - GIROLAMO, *74 Omelie sul libro dei Salmi*, ed. G. Coppa, Milano 1993, 598-600.

45 See L. DOUTRELEAU, *Didyme l'Aveugle sur Zacharie*, (Sch 83) Paris 1962, 292-293.

tion represented by Philo, Origen, Eusebius, Didymus and Athanasius, not to mention those whose writings have been completely lost such as Pierius and Stephen.⁴⁶ The writings of Paul of Tamma represent a type of monasticism not notably different from that of the Antony of the *Letters* or even the ideal represented by the *Vita Antonii*. The notion of a native Coptic monasticism untouched by Hellenistic influences is certainly not supported by these documents. Indeed it is difficult to find any documents that do support it. The Coptic language itself, with its massive borrowing of Greek vocabulary, testifies to the opposite.⁴⁷ The monastic culture represented by these works of Paul of Tamma is a culture centered upon the reading, memorizing, reciting, and interpreting of Scripture.⁴⁸ The goal of reading and interpreting Scripture was, as Origen had so clearly explained on the basis of the Pauline metaphors, to find nourishment for the soul, for the development of the interior life.⁴⁹

For Paul of Tamma the cell is the place where the interior life is developed and that for him is clearly what monasticism is all about. The cell is, as he says, «the judge and educator of the monk», «the wealth of the anchorite» (*De Cella* 36, 37). In this respect then the spirituality of Coptic monasticism is no different from what Holl described as the heart of Greek monasticism. Rather than to assume that there were radically different types of monasticism in Egypt with different sources of inspiration, it might be a better working hypothesis to assume that there was a common tradition about the nature of the spiritual life, understood perhaps in varying degrees, and that it was this that permitted the term «monachos» to be applied to ascetics in very different external forms of monastic life.

46 Palladius mentions that Ammon of Nitria had not only memorized the Old and New Testament but had also perused six hundred myriad lines of writers such as Origen, Didymus, Pierius and Stephen. See *Hist. Laus.* 11,4.

47 For the significance of the development of Coptic as evidence of a bilingual literary culture of an advanced level, see T. ORLANDI, «La patrologia copta», in *Complementi Interdisciplinari di Patrologia*, ed. A. Quacquarelli, Roma 1989, 460.

48 On the subject of the extent of literacy in Egypt in this period, specifically in monastic circles, see E. WIPSZYCKA, «Le degré d'alphabétisation en Egypte byzantine», *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 30 (1984) 279-296.

49 The notion of the Scriptures as providing spiritual food is based above all on the Pauline usage of the metaphor: 1 Cor 3:2-3; 10:1-4. Heb 5:12-14 could also be used to support the idea of the spiritual or allegorical sense of the Scriptures as spiritual nourishment. But the banquet of wisdom described in Prov 9:2-6 is also important. See ORIGEN, *HomGn* 7,4; 16,3-4; *HomLev* 4,6; 4,10; 5,7. The desire to obtain spiritual food could also be a strong motivation for achieving literacy.

«STEERSMAN OF THE MIND».
THE VIRGIN MARY AS IDEAL NUN
(AN INTERPRETATION OF LUKE 1:29
BY RUFUS OF SHOTEP)¹

Towards the end of the sixth century, Rufus, the bishop of Hypsele (Shotep), a nome capital (metropolis)² in Upper Egypt near Lycopolis, delivered a homily on the Annunciation scene, part of a series of homilies on the Gospel of Luke³, in which he drew a contrast between Mary and Eve and then went on to portray Mary as an ideal for nuns to imitate with regard to the development of the interior life. The homily is remarkable for the close acquaintance that it reveals with the exegetical tradition, with the terminology of the ascetical-monastic tradition and for the way in which Rufus has blended and developed these together in an original way.

The portion of the homily with which we are here concerned is developed as a comment on the verse: «when he went into her, he said to her, “Hail, you who have found favor. The Lord be with you”» (Luke 1:28). Rufus gives the phrase «he went into her» an allegorical interpretation⁴, using it to move to the level of the interior life which is the real theme of his homily. «What is this “going into her? Where is Mary?”», he asks. The text, he says, «is informing us of the hidden (life) of the virgin and of her interior way of life and of her quiet

1 Originally published in *Studia Patristica* 30, Leuven 1997, 265-269.

2 PTOLEMY, *Geography*, Bk. 4, ch. 5, lists Hypsele as metropolis of the Hypselite nome.

3 For the text and translation, see J.M. SHERIDAN, *The Homilies of Rufus of Shotep on the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, Roma 1998.

4 Here Rufus is following in the tradition of Philo, Origen, and others, according to whom all of Scripture, indeed every word, has a spiritual sense. See, for example, Origen, *Parh* 4, 1, 7 and, for additional references: ORIGÈNE, *Traité des principes IV* (Livres III et IV): *Commentaire et Fragments* (SCh 269), ed H. Crouzel - M. Simonetti, Paris 1980, 165, n. 45.

tranquillity».⁵ This latter term had already enjoyed extensive use and development in monastic circles.⁶

Rufus then goes on to describe Mary's reaction to the angel's greeting. She was disturbed and «became alert at a speech which was soft as if full of human affection and she was wondering what business has a male speaking with a woman»⁷. Mary's first thought is to wonder whether or not she is being «deceived by the deception with which the mother of my race was deceived in the beginning», and so she is disturbed and does not answer. Rufus exclaims: «Would indeed that the first woman also had been afraid so as not to have acted thoughtlessly and to have spoken in haste». Mary, in contrast, «did not indulge in speech in haste without reflection». She continues to reflect on the angel's greeting and on the fact that «the one who had spoken before with Eve had spoken with the appearance of a friend of mankind». Rufus stresses that the virgin is «learned

- 5 ΕΡΕΠΛΟΓΟΣ ΤΑΜΟ ΜΜΟΝ ΕΠΖΩΝ ΝΤΠΑΡΘΕΝΟC ΜΝΠΖΙΖΟΥΝ ΕΤΕCΠΟΛΙΤΙΑ ΜΝΠΕCΟΡΕΖΤ ΕΤΕCΕCΥΧΙΑ. See SHERIDAN, *The Homilies of Rufus of Shotep*, 194. The term πολιτεία had long since acquired a technical meaning in monastic circles for the interior life. See ATHANASIUS, *Vit. Ant.*, Prol. 2; 7,13; 14,7; 24,6; 28,5; 46,7. In his *Lettre aux vierges*, Athanasius attributes to his predecessor Alexander the affirmation that Mary's way of life (ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΑ) is the model and image of the heavenly way of life (ΤΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΑ ΜΜΑΡΙΑ ΕCΟ ΝΤΥΠΟC ΑΥΩ ΝΖΙΚΩΝ ΜΠΒΙΟC ΕΤΗΠ ΕΜΠΗΥΕ). See ATHANASE, «Lettre aux vierges», in S.ATHANASE: *Lettres festales et pastorales en copte* (CSCO 150, 151, *Scriptores coptici* 19, 20), ed. L.-Th. Lefort, Louvain 1955, CSCO 150, 95 (text); CSCO 151, 76 (translation). For a recent discussion of the authenticity of the ascetic works of Athanasius, see D. BRAKKE, «The Authenticity of the Ascetic Athanasiana», *Orientalia* 63 (1994) 17-56.
- 6 According to ATHANASIUS, *Vit. Ant.* 30,2, the demons fear the quiet (τὸ ἡσυχόν) of the ascetics. The Sahidic version translates this as ΠΕCΟΡΕΖΤ. See G. GARITTE, *S. Antonii Vitae versio Sahidica* (CSCO 117) Paris-Louvain 1949, 37. Athanasius also describes Mary as ΕCΟΡΑΖΤ. See ATHANASE, «Lettre aux vierges» (CSCO 150), 78. The idea is also found in another very early monastic author, Paul of Tamma, who tells his readers that the demons have no mercy towards a man who sits alone in peace (ΖΝΟΥCΟΡΕΖΤ) (*De Cella* 61). He also urges his disciples not to multiply their thoughts so that they may remain quiet (ΕΚCΟΡΑΖΤ) and unconfused (*De Paupertate* 4). See T. ORLANDI, *Paolo di Tamma: opere, Introduzione, Testo, Traduzione e Concordanze*, ed. Tito Orlandi; Roma 1988. Rufus is in fact using both the Coptic and Greek terms together here: ΜΝΠΕCΟΡΕΖΤ ΕΤΕCΥΧΙΑ. For additional references and literature, see also P. MIGUEL, *Lexique du desert: Étude de quelques mots-clés du vocabulaire monastique grec ancien*, Begrolles-en-Mauges 1986, 145-180; P. ADNÈS, «Hésychasme», in *Dictionnaire de la Spiritualité* 7, Paris 1969, 381-399.
- 7 See K. MODRAS, *Omelia copta attribuita a Demetrio di Antiochia sul Natale e Maria Vergine*, Roma 1994, 55-56 (text nos. 196-207) for a quite different presentation of the Annunciation where Gabriel is cautioned not to appear in his glory for fear of terrifying the Virgin who is portrayed as young and inexperienced. In this homily Gabriel stays outside and speaks to her.

in Scripture, knowing the law and the prophets». Because of this she must measure what she has heard against the words of Scripture:

The word that she heard she received like choice and precious gold. She took it into the secure place of judgement of her thought. She refined it well in the fire (cf. Sir 2:5?) of her reason. She cast it in the discernment of her thought. She examined what sort of greeting this was. She set her mind to it. Just as a good steersman takes firm hold of his tiller lest its handle be unmanageable and his boat be shipwrecked, so the virgin took hold of her reason and her thought with attention lest she answer impetuously and take the whole cargo to the bottom.⁸

This is clearly intended to be a description of the ideal reaction of every nun to the greeting of a male.⁹ But it is also a classic description of the ideal monastic attitude in general, stressing as it does the importance of the role of Scripture and the necessity of keeping a close watch over one's thoughts. In what follows I propose to analyze briefly the contrast with Eve and the portrait of Mary/the nun as a good steersman against the background of the earlier tradition.

In drawing a contrast between Eve and Mary, Rufus is following in a long tradition, first developed by Justin Martyr. Justin contrasts the virgin Eve, who receives the word of the serpent and begets disobedience and death, with the virgin Mary, who hears the good news from the angel Gabriel and conceives faith and joy.¹⁰ Similarly, Irenaeus contrasts the seduction of the virgin Eve by an angel and her disobedience with the obedience of the virgin Mary when confronted with the announcement of the good news by the angel.¹¹

Origen, surprisingly, does not develop the idea in his homilies on Genesis and makes no reference to Eve in his homilies on Luke.¹² Ambrose does not

8 For the Coptic text, see SHERIDAN, *The Homilies of Rufus of Shotep*, 178-179.

9 This becomes more explicit later in the same homily when Rufus urges his listeners to beware of the greetings of males. See SHERIDAN, *The Homilies of Rufus of Shotep*, 189-190, 311-312.

10 *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 100,5.

11 *Adv. Haer.* V,19,1: *et seductione illa soluta qua seducta est male ilia quae jam viro evangelizata est bene ab angelo jam sub viro Virgo Maria — quemadmodum enim ilia per angelicum sermonem seducta est ut effugeret Deum praevaricata verbum ejus, ita et haec per angelicum sermonem evangelizata est ut portaret Deum obaudiens ejus verbo; et sicut illa seducta est ut non obaudiret Deo, sic et haec suasa est obaudire Deo, uti virginis Evae virgo Maria fieret advocata; et quemadmodum adstrictum est morti genus humanum per virginem, solutum est per virginem, aequa lance disposita virginali inobaudientia per virginalem obaudientiam....* See also *Adv. Haer.* III,22,4.

12 The contrast is missing altogether in the surviving works of Origen. See A. WILLER, *Ecclesia-Maria: Die Einheit Marias und der Kirche*, (Paradosis 5), Fribourg ²1955, 121.

refer to Eve either but does comment on the reticence of Mary and admonishes virgins to do the same.¹³ Cyril of Jerusalem, on the other hand, does continue the explicit contrast between the virgin Eve being deceived by the serpent and the virgin Mary receiving the good news from the angel.¹⁴ There was thus a rich tradition of comparing and contrasting Eve and Mary upon which Rufus could draw. Most of the earlier comparisons of Eve and Mary dwell on the contrast of disobedience/obedience or death/life or the way to sin as opposed to the entrance to justification, etc.¹⁵ Rufus instead, under the influence of the needs of his audience, develops the contrast on the psychological level (or level of mental asceticism) and emphasizes the prudence of Mary in contrast to the imprudence of Eve.

He was not the first, however, to portray Mary as a model for nuns to imitate. Athanasius, citing the example of his predecessor Alexander, had already proposed Mary as a model for virgins to follow.¹⁶ He pictures her as having a balanced temperament, and living a retired life in peace. Among the aspects of her life that Athanasius offers for imitation are that instead of looking out the window, she was occupied with reading the Scriptures. She prays to God, seeks to avoid letting bad thoughts enter her heart, controls her anger, takes care not to speak badly of anyone nor to listen to such talk. She is not boastful but humble and each day she makes progress.¹⁷ Athanasius does not, however, draw a contrast here between Mary and Eve.

The contrast is found in a sermon on the Nativity ascribed to Origen's pupil, Gregory Thaumaturgus: *Quoniam vero prior virgo a Satana cecidit seducta, Mariae virgini nuntium dedit Gabriel, ut virgo virgini, partus partui similis fiat. Blanditiis decepta protulit Eva sermone lethiferos, Mariaque nuntium accipiens verbum incarnatum et vivificum edidit. Ob Evae sermones Adarnus de paradiso eiectus est. Verbum autem de virgine crucem revelavit, qua latro paradysum Adami ingressus est.* The text is found in J.B. PITRA, *Analecta sacra* 4, Venetia 1883, 394-395.

13 *Expositio euangelii secundum Lucam* 2,8 (CSEL 32).

14 *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 12,15: Διὰ παρθένου τῆς Εὐας ἦλθεν ὁ θάνατος. ἔδει διὰ παρθένου, μᾶλλον δὲ ἐκ παρθένου, φανῆναι τὴν ζωὴν, ἵνα ὥσπερ ἐκείνην ὄφει ἡπάτησεν, οὕτως καὶ ταύτην Γαβριὴλ εὐαγγελίσῃται (PG 33, 741B).

15 For additional references, see *Testi Mariani del Primo Millennio. I. Padri e altri autori greci. II. Padri e altri autori bizantini*, ed. G. GHARIB, Roma 1988, s.v. Eve. The typology or contrast is found in Gregory of Nyssa, Amphilochus, Cyril of Jerusalem, Epiphanius, Nilus of Ancyra and John Chrysostom among others.

16 ATHANASE, «Lettre aux vierges» (CSCO 150, 91 - text; CSCO 151, 72 - translation).

17 ATHANASE, «Lettre aux vierges» (CSCO 150, 78 - text; CSCO 151, 60 - translation).

The image of the steersman can also be found in Athanasius' works and indeed in the same «Lettre aux vierges», but it is not associated with Mary.¹⁸ This image is in fact a commonplace in antiquity and can be found applied to the guidance of the mind or soul by Philo and Origen, and in the philosophical literature as well.¹⁹ One may note that this is a strongly masculine image being applied to a woman, thus suggesting that women are capable of the same degree of spiritual development as men.²⁰

Of particular importance in the passage quoted above, because of its history and significance in the monastic tradition, is the phrase that I have translated as «with attention» (ΖΝΟΥΤΙΖΤΗ). This is the Coptic equivalent of the Greek term προσοχή, which could be described as the most fundamental attitude or exercise of monastic askesis. It can be translated as «attention to oneself» or «paying heed to oneself» and can be found numerous times in the Scriptures as a verbal admonition.²¹ Philo of Alexandria had used it to describe the ascetic activity of the patriarch Jacob.²² Both Clement of Alexandria and Origen had used it as well in reference to the development of the spiritual life.²³ It involves a continuous concentration on the present moment, which must be lived as if it were both the first and the last. Thus it is closely related to the thought of death. In chap. 19 Athanasius has Antony quote Paul, «I die daily» (1 Cor 15:31), adding «Indeed, if we too, live as if we were to die each new day, we shall

18 ATHANASE, «Sur la charite et la temperance» (CSCO 150, 97 - translation), in *Lettres festales et pastorales en copte* (CSCO 150, 151; Scriptores coptici 19, 20) Louvain 1955; ATHANASE, «Lettre aux vierges» (CSCO 150, 90 - text; CSCO 151, 71 - translation). In this latter citation Athanasius uses the identical phrase used by Rufus for taking hold of the tiller «firmly» (ΖΝΟΥΩΡΞ), which is the equivalent of the Greek ἀκριβεία.

19 See for example ORIGEN, *CCels* 6.19 where he quotes PLATO, *Phaedrus* 247C using this image; PHILO, *Sacr.* 45; PAUL OF TAMMA, *Opus sine titulo* 100 (see note 6 above); GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Life of Moses* 11-13. The image may be found also in Epictetus, Plutarch, Pseudo-Macarius and many others.

20 Compare Gregory of Nyssa's portrait of his sister Macrina (*Vita sanctae Macrinae*) in which she is portrayed as rising above her nature as woman to become the spiritual master and teacher of men. For a discussion of this theme, see GREGORIO DI NISSA, *La Vita di Macrina*, ed. E. Giannarelli, Cinisello Balsamo 1988, 30-41.

21 E.g., Deut 4:23; 8:1; Prov 2:1; 4:1, 20. See R. VERNAY, «Attention», in *Dictionnaire de la Spiritualité* 1, Paris 1937, 1058-1077.

22 For Philo it is a spiritual exercise, a part of askesis: *Her.* 253: πάντα γὰρ τὰ τῆς ἀσκήσεως ἐδωδία κατέστηκεν, ἡ ζήτησις, ἡ σκέψις, ἡ ἀνάγνωσις, ἡ ἀκρόασις, ἡ προσοχή, ἡ ἐγκράτεια, ἡ ἐξαδιαφόρησις τῶν ἀδιαφόρων.

23 See ORIGEN, *CCels* 3,69, where he draws a comparison between the spiritual life and that of a tightrope walker. Both require προσοχή (attention) and ἀσκήσις (exercise).

not sin». It means to live constantly in the presence of God and conscious of the presence of God. This fundamental attitude of vigilance was also the basic spiritual attitude that characterized the Stoic philosophers. One could cite numerous quotations from philosophers such as Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, and Porphyry both with regard to the need to keep in mind the thought of death (as moral incentive) and to live in the presence of God.²⁴

When Antony takes up the monastic life, Athanasius uses this terminology to describe what he did: «he himself devoted all his time to ascetic living, examining himself (προσέχων ἑαυτῷ) and subjecting himself to a firm discipline, near his own house. For there were not yet so many monasteries in Egypt, and no monk even knew of the faraway desert. Whoever wished to take heed to himself (ἑαυτῷ προσέχειν) engaged in spiritual exercises by himself not far from his own village».²⁵ For Rufus it is this quality that Eve lacked, for she «acted thoughtlessly», «spoke in haste», and «without reflection». It is this quality, however, that distinguishes the good steersman of the soul.

Thus Rufus has skillfully combined a key monastic notion with a classic image for the governance of the soul and inserted it within the primordial temptation scene in the context of a homily on the Annunciation. The Virgin thus becomes a model for the development of the interior life for all virgins or nuns as regards the study of Scripture, the practice of ἡσυχία (*hesychia*) and of προσοχή (*prosoche*). This passage is of interest also for the picture that it provides of monastic culture at the end of the sixth century in Egypt. It would seem that the traditional monastic spiritual teaching was alive and well.²⁶

24 For a discussion of the similarities between the philosophical and monastic literature on these points and numerous references to the philosophical literature, see P. HADOT, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (Études Augustiniennes), Paris 1987, 59-74.

25 *Vit. Ant.* 3,1-2. The Sahidic translation of προσέχων ἑαυτῷ is ⲉϣⲧⲏⲛⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲩ while ἑαυτῷ προσέχειν is rendered as ⲭⲓⲛⲣⲁⲩ ⲉⲣⲟⲩ. See note 6 above for the edition of the Sahidic translation.

26 The fact that the Virgin Mary is portrayed as learned in Scripture and as reading the Scriptures suggests that this was a common practice for nuns in Egypt.

COPTIC CHRISTIANITY¹

The words «Copt» and «Coptic», derived from the Arabic *qibt*, which is in turn derived from the Greek word for Egypt (*Aigyptos*), has been used in Latin and modern European languages since the sixteenth century to designate the modern Christian inhabitants of Egypt and the language used by them in their liturgy. The Arabs used the word of the native Christian inhabitants of Egypt and it was also used in late medieval Egypt, especially in the Mamluk period (1249-1517) to designate Muslims of Coptic (as distinguished from Arabic) descent. Westerners have used it, inaccurately, to designate the church in Ethiopia, which, prior to 1959, was dependent on the church in Egypt. The Arabic word *qibt* is used by the Coptic (Egyptian) Christians as the equivalent of the Coptic word for Egypt (*cheme*). With the increased flow of Coptic manuscripts into Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the more scientific study of the language, the word «Coptic» came to be applied to the Egyptian language in all its dialects as spoken and written from the third century of the present era onwards, independently of the religious association.

According to the church historian Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 2: 16, 24), reflecting the traditions of his day (early fourth century), the evangelist Mark first preached the gospel in Alexandria, and the Coptic church claims an unbroken succession of patriarchs from that time to the present. Although manuscript evidence reveals that Christianity was firmly established in Egypt in the early second century, it is only in the last quarter of that century that it emerges into the full light of history with the figures of the catechists Pantaenus, Clement of Alexandria and Origen, and the bishop Demetrius I (188-230) as well as heretics such as Basileides. By the time of the peace of the church under Constantine and the Council of Nicaea (325) the number of bishops had notably increased. Under Athanasius another diocese was established at Philae in southern Egypt. The Egyptian church was unique among the oriental churches in the monarchi-

1 Published originally in *The Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Christianity*, ed. K.Parry - D.J. Melling - D. Brady - S.H. Griffith - J.F. Healey, Oxford 1999, 129-135. The statistics have not been updated. Pope Shenouda III died March 17, 2012.

cal structure that it developed under the bishop of Alexandria. From the third century onwards it was the custom of the bishops of Alexandria to send a circular letter to all the bishops of Egypt announcing the date of Easter and dealing with other doctrinal and disciplinary matters. Tension caused by this structure may have contributed to the Meletian schism that began during the reign of Alexander I (312-326) when the bishop of Lycopolis, Meletius, ordained other bishops. By long established tradition all the bishops in Egypt are ordained by the bishop of Alexandria. Since the fourth century the church in Egypt has dated events from the accession of Diocletian as emperor in 284, heralding a period later referred to as the age of the martyrs because of the numerous victims of persecution, including the patriarch Peter (d. 311), at the beginning of the fourth century.

Greek had been spoken in Egypt since the conquest of the country by Alexander the Great in 332 BC and the foundation the following year of the city of Alexandria, which soon became one of the principal cities of the Hellenistic world. Greek speaking communities were to be found in towns throughout the Nile Valley and Christianity seems to have spread first among the Greek-speaking population in these towns. There is reason to believe that, at least by the second and third century, there was a fairly large and prosperous bilingual population of native Egyptian origin. The older forms of writing the Egyptian language, hieroglyphic and hieratic, had long since given way to the demotic script for practical purposes, but it too had given way to Greek for most administrative purposes. The creation of the Coptic script in the middle or second half of the third century seems to have been a deliberate attempt on the part of a bilingual educated elite to revive the Egyptian language as a literary medium. This script made use of the Greek alphabet together with several letters borrowed from the demotic tongue to represent sounds not found in the Greek alphabet. Documents using this script exist from the fourth century in a variety of Coptic dialects including Fayumic, Achmimic and Sahidic. The last of these quickly became the standard literary dialect, and the first major literary work to have been produced in this language appears to have been the translation of the Christian scriptures. This form of writing was also employed by others besides orthodox Christians as Manichaean, gnostic and other documents testify. Most of the early Coptic literature consists in translations from Greek works but some early Christian apocryphal writings may have been composed in Coptic.

Original Christian literature in Sahidic dating from the fourth to the seventh centuries includes many lives of saints, encomiums, homilies, catecheses, monastic rules and letters.

From at least the first part of the fourth century the monastic movement became an important feature of the life of the Egyptian church and has remained such throughout its history. The monastic movement assumed a variety of external forms ranging from the solitary hermit to the highly organized cenobitic communities and this variety is found throughout the Nile Valley as well as in delta from the beginning of this period. Two names in particular are associated with the rise of monasticism: those of Antony (d. 356) and Pachomius (d. 346) who became the patrons of the eremitical and cenobitical forms of monasticism respectively. Letters attributed to them and to the successors of Pachomius, Theodore and Horsiesius, are among the earliest items of Coptic literature. By the middle of the fourth century many thousands had taken up the monastic life and the fame of the monks spread beyond Egypt, attracting many recruits from other parts of the Roman empire. Soon after the death of Antony, Athanasius wrote his *Life*, which became the first great classic of monastic literature and was quickly translated into many other languages. The monks of Scetis and Cellia became particularly famous outside of Egypt because of the accounts of foreigners such as Palladius but the most important Coptic monastic writer was undoubtedly Shenute of Atripe, who, however, remained unknown outside of Egypt until modern times.

Due partly to the strategic importance of the city of Alexandria but also to the vigor of the literary tradition of the Egyptian church, the patriarchs of Alexandria played an important role in the fourth and fifth centuries in the affairs of the church outside as well as inside of Egypt. This is particularly true of Athanasius whose long reign (326-373) established him as the champion of the orthodox faith of Nicea against the Arian heresy. Theophilus (385-412) is known chiefly for his role in the Origenist controversy and in the deposition of John Chrysostom, the archbishop of Constantinople. His nephew Cyril of Alexandria (412-444) became a principal protagonist in the conflict over Nestorius and a dominant figure at the Council of Ephesus (431), which he attended with an entourage of fifty bishops. His theological writings were an important factor in the refusal of the Egyptian church under Patriarch Dioscorus (451-454) to accept the innovative language of the Council of Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo. Athanasius, Cyril and Dioscorus are revered as saints by the Coptic church.

The Council of Chalcedon (451) proved to be a turning point in the relationship of the Egyptian church with the other churches. From the point of view of the Alexandrian Christology loyal to Cyril's formulation, the definition of the two natures of Christ by Chalcedon was essentially the adoption of the Nestorian heresy and therefore a denial of the full reality of the Incarna-

tion. From the point of view of the defenders of Chalcedon, the Alexandrian-Egyptian theology was «monophysite», that is, it did not distinguish the two natures of Christ, divine and human, but recognized only a single nature (*mia physis* in Cyril's terminology). The dispute revolved around the sense of the word *physis* (nature), and neither side was able to recognize that the other was using the term in a different sense. In the course of the century and more that followed, various attempts were made to preserve the unity of the church (and the empire), by devising compromise formulas, by controlling the appointment of the patriarch of Alexandria or by force. The Egyptian church was not alone in refusing to accept Chalcedon, and the long exile of the most important literary exponent of the monophysite theology, the patriarch Severus of Antioch, spent in Egypt (518-538), helped to reinforce the resistance of the Egyptian church. Severus is revered as a saint by the Coptic church and is mentioned in the liturgy together with Athanasius, Cyril and Dioscurus, among others.

The patriarchate of Theodosius I (536 - 567) was particularly decisive for the formation of the Coptic church. When he refused to subscribe to the formula of Chalcedon, Theodosius was brought to Constantinople by the emperor Justinian and kept under house arrest for over thirty years. The Egyptian church did not recognize the validity of sacraments administered by those who subscribed to the formula of Chalcedon, whom they regarded as heretics. Therefore they would not accept ordination from the patriarch imposed by Constantinople. This caused the gradual depletion of the hierarchy and the resulting crisis led to establishment of a separate hierarchy and patriarch through the intervention of Jacob Baradaeus, consecrated bishop by Theodosius in 543 with a roving commission. So successful was Jacob in establishing a monophysite clergy during his constant journeys throughout the Middle East that these churches became known as Jacobite. From the time of Peter IV (576-578) there existed in Egypt two competing patriarchs and hierarchies, the Chalcedonian (or Melchite) and the non-Chalcedonian or Jacobite. The vast majority of the people in the Egyptian church recognized only the latter and the former was maintained in power only in the city of Alexandria with the aid of the civil and military authority. The non-Chalcedonian patriarch had to take refuge in one of the monasteries outside of Alexandria. The long patriarchate of Damian (578-605), a Syrian by birth, was particularly important for consolidating the non-Chalcedonian hierarchy. A last but futile attempt to force the Egyptian church to accept Chalcedon was made with the appointment of the Melchite patriarch Cyrus al-Muqawqas («the Caucasian», 631-641) with full civil and military as well as

religious power. The Arab conquest of Egypt in 641-2 finally put an end to the Byzantine efforts to control the church and opened a new era in the history of the Egyptian church. There has continued to be a Melchite (Greek Orthodox) patriarch of Alexandria, although under Turkish rule he was obliged to live in Constantinople. It is important to emphasize that the original division was not along lines of Greek *v.* Copt: all of the original champions of the monophysite cause, for example, were speakers and writers of Greek.

It is estimated that at the time of the Arab invasion two thirds at least of the Egyptian population was Christian, but the pressure exerted to convert to Islam in the subsequent centuries resulted in the church being reduced to a minority status in the country. It also resulted in the gradual disappearance of Greek as a spoken language and even as a liturgical language and the substitution of the Bohairic dialect of Coptic as the liturgical language and eventually of Arabic as the spoken language of the Christian population.

At the beginning of Islamic rule, despite the imposition of the poll tax (*jizyah*) levied on non-Muslims («people of the book» *ahl-al-kitab*) the Christians enjoyed religious freedom and the Patriarch Benjamin was received with honor by the conqueror 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ. However, in 706 a series of laws was introduced to encourage Arabization and Islamization of the population, including a law requiring the use of Arabic in public documents and a decree ordering the destruction of Christian icons. The latter led to revolt, which was repressed with bloodshed. In 750 Egypt passed from Umayyad rule (Damascus) to that of the Abbasids (Baghdad). A series of Coptic revolts led to waves of repression which in turn led to numerous conversions to Islam, with the result that by the middle of the ninth century the Coptic Christians had become a minority. Although the rule of the Fatimids (969-1171) as such was not hostile toward the Copts, one of the most serious persecutions took place under Caliph Al-Hakim (996-1021), who ordered the destruction of the churches and the confiscation of their property. The Coptic population continued to decrease and the language itself began to die out.

In this situation the monasteries, particularly those of the Wādī-al-Naṭrūn, the Red Sea monasteries of Antony and Paul, and the White Monastery near Sohag, played an important role in the preservation of the Coptic heritage. Here the earlier literature was collected and copied for preservation. From the ninth to the eleventh centuries the majority of the patriarchs came from the monastery of Abu-Makar in the Wādī-al-Naṭrūn; it was this predominance which led to the adoption, noted above, of the Bohairic dialect of the region as the liturgi-

cal language of the Coptic church. This period also saw the beginning of Arabic Coptic literature, of which one of the earliest and most important works is the *History of the Patriarchs* associated with the name of Sawirus ibn al-Muqaffa', which represents a tradition of historical writing continued by later authors that is our main source for Coptic history. Another important monument of Coptic literature in Arabic is the work on *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt* by Abu al-Makarim (but attributed erroneously in the English translation to Abu Salih the Armenian). In this period also Arabic was introduced into the liturgy and from the late medieval period onwards the liturgical manuscripts tend to be in both Arabic and Coptic (Bohairic). The situation of the Copts in Egypt did not change significantly in the subsequent periods of Muslim rule (under the Ayyubids, Mamluks, Ottoman), throughout which, despite sporadic waves of persecution, Copts often held important administrative posts.

The modern era for the Copts began with the French invasion under Bonaparte in 1798, and the rule of Mohammed Ali permitted them to be re-integrated into the national life of the country and eventually to receive equal recognition before the law. The patriarchate of Cyril IV (1854-1861) marked an important step in the revival of Coptic institutions and the promotion of education. More recently the revival in the Coptic monasteries during the last thirty years has had important effects throughout the life of the Coptic church. In recent years the rise of Islamic fundamentalism has caused tensions and even led to the house arrest of the patriarch, Pope Shenouda III, from 1981-1985.

The history of the Coptic liturgy (especially the surviving manuscripts) is insufficiently studied to give a clear account of the stages of its development. The liturgical language of the Egyptian church had been Greek from the beginning and Greek continued to be used in the liturgy, at least in part, long after the Arab invasion. In the eighth century the patriarchs were still sending their festal letters in Greek to other parts of Egypt. But there is also evidence that Coptic (Sahidic) was being introduced into the liturgy in the seventh century. It is not clear that there was ever a completely Sahidic liturgy or that there was uniform liturgical practice in the Coptic church before the time of the patriarch Gabriel II (1130-1144), who made Bohairic the liturgical language and forbade the use of anaphoras other than those transmitted under the names of Basil, Gregory and Mark/Cyril. By this time Arabic was already entering into the celebration of the liturgy. The decree of Gabriel V in 1411 seems to have given a definitive form to the liturgy; by this time it had already undergone certain Syrian and even Byzantine influences despite the separation from Constantinople. In ad-

dition to the Eucharist, the Coptic church knows the sacraments of baptism, chrism, penance, marriage, orders and anointing of the sick. The liturgical books include the *Euchologion*, the lectionary (*katameros*), the *synaxary* (lives of the saints), *Horologion* (canonical hours), the *Difnar* (antiphonal), the sacramentary and the pontifical, among others.

The Coptic calendar is punctuated by a number of periods of fasting. The church celebrates fourteen feasts of the Lord, seven major and seven minor, and five major feasts of the Virgin Mary, as well as feasts of the saints and angels.

From ancient times pilgrimages, often lasting as long as a week and connected with a fair, have been an important feature of popular religious culture in the Coptic church. In ancient times the most important pilgrimage center was that of St. Menas at Maryut near Alexandria. More than sixty pilgrimage centers exist, including that of St. Menas, that of the Virgin Mary at Musturud, Mar Jirjis at Mit Damsis, Sitt Dimyanah near Bilgas and Deir el-Muharraq. Some sites are identified with the sojourn of the Holy Family in Egypt, a source of popular devotion already in antiquity.

Estimates of the number of members of the Coptic Orthodox Church vary considerably (from 4 to 8 million) because of the inexact population figures for Egypt. It is undoubtedly the largest Christian community in the Middle East. The church organization includes some twenty dioceses in Egypt and dioceses outside Egypt in North America, East Africa, France, Jerusalem, Nubia, and Khar-toum because of the large number of Copts who have emigrated since the 1970s. By 1995 there were over forty Coptic communities in the USA, nine in Canada, fourteen in Australia, and nine in Great Britain. There are also Coptic communities with resident priests in other European countries including Austria, Italy and Switzerland. There are about 1,500 married priests in the church in Egypt. The bishops by ancient tradition are not married and are usually drawn from the monks. In addition to the diocesan bishops and their auxiliaries, there are a number of bishops with special responsibilities such as ecumenical affairs, youth and higher education. The church maintains schools and seminaries in Egypt and conducts an extensive Sunday school program. The patriarch is chosen from one of three candidates selected by an assembly composed of the bishops, representatives of the clergy, the monks and laymen. The final selection is made by a child who draws the name of one of the three candidates. The present patriarch is Shenouda III, elected in 1971, under whose leadership ecumenical dialogue has been carried on with the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, the Anglican communion, and the Evangelical and Reformed churches.

In addition to the Coptic Orthodox church there is a relatively small body of Coptic rite united with the Roman Catholic church. Although Franciscans are known to have been in Egypt earlier, the continuous presence of the Catholics in Egypt in modern times dates to the Franciscan mission in Cairo in 1630, followed by the Jesuits in 1697. Vicars-apostolic have been appointed since 1741 for Catholics of the Coptic rite which at that time numbered about 2000. Pope Leo XII erected a Coptic patriarchate in 1824 but did not name a patriarch. Leo XIII named the first Catholic patriarch, Cyril Makarios, in 1899; he was deposed 1910, but a second was not named until 1947. Today the church has six dioceses and about 200 priests with 100 Coptic parishes and a total membership of about 150,000 members.

Although numerous Protestant bodies are represented in Egypt, the only one that defines itself as Coptic is the Coptic Evangelical Church, founded by the United Presbyterian Church in North America in 1854 and completely independent since 1957. The church has about 250 churches plus 200 prayer centers, a community of about 250,000 with about 340 pastors and maintains the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo and a large publishing house.

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THE SPIRITUAL AND INTELLECTUAL WORLD OF EARLY EGYPTIAN MONASTICISM¹

1) PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

1.1 Introduction – The aims and limits of this study

This study aims to consider the ideals and goals of early (fourth century) Egyptian monasticism as expressed by the monks themselves and those, such as Athanasius, who exercised a strong influence on this movement. In other words, how did monks themselves understand what they did? What spiritual teaching did they receive? What was their intellectual world? The adjective «intellectual» is deliberately chosen to indicate that the world of the Egyptian monks extended beyond the normal modern usage of «spiritual» and included the broader world of Christianized Hellenistic culture.

This particular contribution differs from other studies of early Egyptian monasticism. Its aim will not be to explain or describe early monasticism in Egypt except from the point of view of its spiritual doctrine and teaching. Neither will it attempt to explain the social, political and economic factors, which also influenced the motivation of tens of thousands of people in a relatively short space of time to undertake this particular form of life.²

1 Published in: *Coptica* 1 (2002) 2-51. An earlier version of this article originally appeared in Italian in: *L'Egitto cristiano: aspetti e problemi in età tardo-antica*, ed. A. Camplani (SEAug 56), Roma 1997, 177-216. It has been translated by nuns of Stanbrook Abbey and slightly revised by the author. I wish to thank Daniel L. Dolan for editorial assistance.

2 For the social and economic situation in Egypt in this period the following recent works may be usefully consulted: R.S. BAGNALL - B.W. FRIER, *The Demography of Roman Egypt* (Cambridge Studies in population, economy and society in past time 23), Cambridge 1994; R.S. BAGNALL, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, Princeton 1993. On the the social and economic aspects of early Egyptian monasticism, see: E. WIPSZYCKA, *Les ressources et les activités économiques des églises en Egypte de IV^e au VIII^e siècle* (Papyrologica Bruxellensia 10), Brussels 1972; *eadem*, «Les aspects économique de la vie de la communauté des Kellia», in *Le site monastique copte des Kellia: sources historique et explorations archéologiques. Actes du Colloque de Genève, 13 au 15 août 1984*, Genève 1986, 117-144; J. GOEHRING, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert: Studies in Early Egyptian Monasticism* (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity), Harrisburg, PA 1999; various chapters in *Egypt in the Byzantine World 300-700*, ed. R.S. Bagnall, Cambridge 2007; E. WIPSZYCKA,

The more recent literature on the phenomenon of early Egyptian monasticism and of early Christian asceticism has emphasized the social significance of «ascetic behavior».³ A focus on the spiritual ambience does not denigrate the value of sociological analyses of the way in which monks, individually or in groups, interacted with society, that is to say, their social role. However, without an understanding of their intellectual background and their teaching regarding the interior life, it is not possible to explain this movement adequately. Certainly, it cannot be understood exclusively on the basis of social and economic factors, whatever their influence on it may have been.

1.2 The Phenomenon

Dating for the rise of the monastic movement in Egypt, or even deciding on the criteria to establish a date is notably difficult. Is a linguistic criterion sufficient, that is, the entry into common usage of a new word, the Greek word *monachos* (μοναχός)? Or is geography a better guide, that is, the movement of Christians towards the desert? Both these elements are present in a fourth century source-text for the development of the phenomenon of monasticism, the *Vita Antonii* of Athanasius. In his preface to the work, addressed to non-Egyptian monks, Athanasius observes that the use of the word «monk» (*monachos*) had become established among them, implying that in Egypt the use of this word was relatively recent. In chapter 14, speaking of the influx that forced Antony to leave his retreat, Athanasius observes that by then «the desert had become a city of monks». These texts suggest that, at least from Athanasius' point of view, this influx into the desert under Antony's influence marks the beginning of the monastic movement.

However, drawing firm conclusions requires further consideration. Even the internal evidence of the *Vita Antonii* suggests that Antony was not the only initiator in the development of the monastic movement. For example, in chapter 15, Antony becomes the spiritual father «of those who were already monks» (τῶν μὲν ἤδη μοναχῶν). Neither is there conclusive evidence that the development of the Pachomian monastic movement further south was influenced by

Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (IVe-VIIIe siècles) (The Journal of Juristic Papyrology Supplements 11), Warsaw 2009.

3 See for example: P. BROWN, «Anthony and Pachomius», in *The Making of Late Antiquity*, Cambridge, Mass. 1978), 80-101; *idem*, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, London 1988; *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook* (Studies in Antiquity & Christianity), ed. V. L. Wimbush, Minneapolis 1990.

the disciples of Antony, even though there is evidence of communication between these groups later on.⁴ Likewise, the Meletian monastic communities apparently came into existence independently of these two groups.⁵ The word *monachos* appears for the first time in documentary sources from the year 324 AD, in a context which is apparently independent of all of these groups.⁶

More recently, some scholars have all but denied the possibility of speaking of the «origins» of monasticism.⁷ The difficulty arises partly from the continuity between the spiritual teaching of early monasticism and that of the preceding period. Still, the spread of this phenomenon in Egypt is first evident in the first half of the fourth century. There is no doubt that new forms of life emerged at this time in the Christian Church, whether as colonies of hermits in the desert, gathered round such a figure as Antony or Macarius, or as communities organized on a pattern similar to those founded by Pachomius. While the church historian Eusebius, writing in the first part of the fourth century, makes no explicit mention of the phenomenon, historians writing in the first part of the fifth century, Rufinus, Socrates and Sozomen,⁸ showed monastic life to be a notable component of the life of the Church. Indeed, during the previous century, the monastic movement had given rise to a new genre of literature.

When Athanasius wrote the *Vita Antonii*, probably in 357, various forms of monasticism were already to be found throughout the whole of Egypt.⁹

4 See for example the accounts of visits by Pachomian monks to Antony: L.-TH. LEFORT, *S. Pachomii Vitae Sahidice Scriptae* (CSCO 99, 100; S.Coptici 9,10), Louvain 1965, 177-80; A. VEILLEUX, *Pachomian Koinonia I*, Kalamazoo, Mich. 1982, 182-192.

5 A. CAMPLANI, «In margine alla storia dei Meliziani», *Augustinianum* 30 (1990) 313-351. J. A. GOEHRING, «Melitian Monastic Organization: A Challenge to Pachomian Originality», in *Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference on Patristic Studies* (Studia Patristica 25), Louvain 1993, 388-395. The Meletian schism dates from the period before the foundations by Pachomius.

6 E. A. JUDGE, «The Earliest Use of Monachos for "Monk" (P. Coll. Youtie 77) and the Origins of Monasticism», *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 20 (1977) 72-89.

7 J. GOEHRING, «The Origins of Monasticism», in *Eusebius, Christianity and Judaism* (ed. H.W. Attridge - G. Hata, Leiden 1992, 235-255. J. C. O'NEILL, «The Origins of Monasticism», *The Makings of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, ed. R. Williams, Cambridge 1989, 270-287. O'Neill concludes somewhat simplistically that there must always have been monasteries since that is how manuscripts were transmitted. For Goehring it is rather a question of outdated and mistaken historiographical categories.

8 See Rufinus, *Hist. Eccles.* II, 3-4, 7-9; Socrates, *Hist. Eccles.* IV, 23-26, VI, 7-15; Sozomen, *Hist. Eccles.* I, 12-14, III, 14-16, VI, 20, 28-34.

9 For the dating of the work, see A. DE VOGÜÉ, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'Antiquité*. 1. *Le monachisme latin de la mort d'Antoine à la fin du séjour de Jérôme à*

Monastic communities at Nitria, the Cells (the settlement founded 12 miles from Nitria on the advice of Antony) and Scetis were well-established and numerous.¹⁰ Even if evidence for many monastic settlements comes from the later part of the century, probably not a few of these would date from the middle of the century, or maybe even earlier. The narratives of the *Historia Monachorum* (the Greek travelogue composed in 394 by monks from the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem),¹¹ even if we take into consideration their penchant for numerical overstatement, witness to the wide dissemination of the monastic movement and the various forms of its organization. Testimony to the spread of monasticism comes also from figures unknown to the Greek sources, such as Paul of Tamma,¹² Phib and Apollo,¹³ Shenute¹⁴ and settlements further south near Aswan, most of which date probably from the second half of the fourth century, if not earlier.

From the beginning all these diverse forms of monasticism flourished alongside one another down the whole length of the Nile valley.¹⁵ These groups ranged across a spectrum: highly organized cenobite communities such as those of Pachomius and Shenute; informal groups of ascetics gathered round a master

Rome (356-385) (Patrimoine christianisme), Paris 1991, 16. Athanase d'Alexandrie, *Vie d'Antoine* (SCH 400), ed. G.J.M. Bartelink, Paris 1994, 27ff.

- 10 Although it needs to be updated in terms of more recent archaeological discoveries, the best and most accurate account of the history of these communities continues to be that H. G. EVELYN WHITE, *The Monasteries of the Wâdi 'n Natrûn. Part II: The History of the Monasteries of Nitria and of Scetis*, ed. Walter Hauser, New York 1932. See also D. J. CHITTY, *The Desert a City: An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism under the Christian Empire*, Crestwood, N.Y. 1977.
- 11 For the Greek text see, A.-J. FESTUGIÈRE, *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, Bruxelles 1961. Rufinus translated the text into Latin a few years later (403-404) adding material of his own.
- 12 Cf. T. ORLANDI, *Paolo di Tamma: opere* (Introduzione, Testo, Traduzione e Concordanze), Roma 1988.
- 13 Cf. T. ORLANDI - A. CAMPAGNANO, *Vite dei Monaci Phife Longino* (Testi e Documenti per lo Studio dell'Antichità 51), Milano 1975; T. ORLANDI - A. CAMPAGNANO, *Vite di monaci copti*, Roma 1984.
- 14 The most recent and thorough study of the works of Shenoute, which is also the basis for future research in this field, is: S. EMMEL, *Shenoute's Literary Corpus*, (CSCO 599-600), Louvain 2004.
- 15 H.E. WINLOCK e W.E. CRUM, *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes I*, New York 1926, 125. See also J.A. GOEHRING, «Through a Glass Darkly: Diverse Images of the Apotaktikoi(ai) of Early Egyptian Monasticism», in *Rhetorics of Restraint: Discourse Strategies, Ascetic Piety and the Interpretation of Religion* (Semceia 58), ed. V.L. Wimbush, Atlanta 1992, 25-45.

(such as Antony or Macarius); anchorites or solitaries, sometimes with a disciple; recluses like John of Lycopolis (who likewise had disciples); and wandering monks like Phib and Apollo. According to Rufinus, the late fourth century historian and translator, there were about fifty monasteries (*monasteria*) at Nitria, some of which housed several monks, others a few, and still others only a single monk.¹⁶ Palladius depicts a similar situation at Nitria, reckoning the overall number of monks to be around 5000.¹⁷

Even though most monasteries were in the desert, and even though, at least after the publication of Athanasius' *Vita Antonii*, the desert was considered to be the ideal place for monks to live, certainly not all monks lived there.¹⁸ The characteristics of Egyptian geography are distinctive: the desert is never very far from cultivated land (χώρα), and, at least beyond the delta, the desert is always visible and normally easily accessible on foot from every town or village.¹⁹ It seems that the Pachomian monasteries were situated not in the desert itself, but in villages, or were themselves built up as villages. Shenute's celebrated White Monastery lay on the fringes of cultivated land. In recent years E. Wipszycka has pointed to the existence of communities of men and, even more numerous, of women, in Alexandria and other cities, and their surroundings and to a significant amount of communication between the city and monastic communities in the desert.²⁰

16 Rufinus, *Historia Monachorum*, 21. This information is not found in the Greek text.

17 Palladius, *Hist. Laus.*, 7. In the same chapter Palladius claims that there were two thousand monks in the «monasteries» in the vicinity of Alexandria. To have an idea of the location of the known monasteries in Egypt, one may usefully consult the maps published in *The Coptic Encyclopedia* 8, ed. A. Atiya, New York 1991, 4-11, keeping in mind, however, the reservations expressed by R.-G. COQUIN, «Réflexions sur l'expansion du mouvement ascétique égyptien», in *Mélanges M.-M. Martin*, Le Caire 1992, 13-19.

18 J.E. GOEHRING, «The Encroaching Desert: Literary Production and Ascetic Space in Early Christian Egypt», *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1/3 (1993) 281-296. On the role of the desert, see A. GUILLAUMONT, «La conception du désert chez les moines d'Égyptes», in *Aux origines du Monachisme chrétien: Pour une phénoménologie du monachisme* (Spiritualité Orientale, 30); Bégrolles-en-Mauges 1979, 67-87. Jerome (*Epist.* 22) seems to find the *remnuoth* worthy of reproach because they live in cities and towns (*in urbibus et castellis*), a detail omitted in the description of the *sarabaitae* by Cassian (*Conl.* 18,7), who does not seem to share Jerome's idea.

19 R.S. BAGNALL, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, Princeton 1993, 295-296.

20 E. WIPSYCKA, «Le monachisme égyptien et les villes», in *Études sur le Christianisme dans l'Égypte de l'Antiquité tardive* (SEAug 52), Roma 1996, 281-336.

1.3 The Sources

Any attempt to describe the spiritual and intellectual world of early Egyptian monks comes up against the quite difficult problem of the sources: the literature produced by those who were directly involved in the ascetic movement, and writings which dealt with monasticism.²¹

Unfortunately no one has written a literary history of early Egyptian monasticism of the kind produced by Adalbert de Vogüé for Latin monastic literature.²² Latin monastic literature was to a large extent inspired by or translated from Greek ascetic literature, and the date at which these made their way into the Latin world can be determined. However, many works which were in circulation in Egypt in the fourth and fifth centuries in Greek and Coptic never gained access to the Latin world. The question of which documents should have a place in a history of Egyptian monastic literature is bound up with the question of the origins of the monastic movement and which historical figures should be recognized among adherents of the actual movement. For example, a strong case can be made for the inclusion of works such as the ascetic writings of St. Athanasius or the exegetical works of Didymus the Blind, because both these authors were profoundly involved in the development of the monastic movement.

The literature of early Egyptian monasticism is further complicated by the bilingualism of the sources, and the world in which they were produced. To understand this spiritual and intellectual environment, it is important to avoid any clear-cut demarcation between monks who spoke Greek and those who spoke Coptic.²³ For many centuries Greek had been spoken in every town of any importance along the Nile valley. There is also reason to believe that, at least at first, Coptic literature was the creation of a cultured elite who were equally at ease in Greek and Coptic.²⁴ Many of those who dedicated themselves to the monas-

21 Documentary sources such as letters and archival material might also shed light upon our subject but the principal sources are certainly the literary ones. For these purposes, the question of the sources can be considered separately from the question of what the monks read, which will be treated in the following section.

22 A. DE VOGÜÉ, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'Antiquité 1-12* (Patrimoine chrétien), Paris 1991-2008.

23 See A. GUILLAUMONT, «Copte (littérature spirituelle)», in *Dictionnaire de la Spiritualité* 1, Paris 1952, 2266-78.

24 WIPSZYCKA, «Le monachisme égyptien et les villes», 42-43. See also T. ORLANDI, «La patrologia copta», in *Complementi Interdisciplinari di Patrologia*, ed. A. Quacquarelli, Roma 1989, 458.

tic life probably came from this level of society.²⁵ The documentation suggests not only peaceful inter-monastic co-existence but also intense exchange even through Greek and Coptic interpreters.²⁶

The selection among sources can lead to markedly different conclusions about the spiritual world of early monasticism. Among the sources should ideally be included not only hagiographical works and explicitly ascetic writings, whether these be letters, catecheses or Rules, but also much exegetical literature. An initial, but not exhaustive, catalogue should include for the fourth century not only Athanasius' *Vita Antonii*, but also his ascetic works,²⁷ the letters of Antony, the Pachomian literature, the letters of Ammonas, the works of Paul of Tamma, Evagrius Ponticus, Didymus of Alexandria, the *Historia Monachorum*, the *Historia Lausiaca* of Palladius, the only possibly authentic letter of Macarius, and to some extent the *Apophthegmata*. These last, along with the Pachomian literature, should be used with great caution, because they are *Apophthegmata* compiled over a long span of time, drawn from a variety of written and oral sources, filtered through the light of later events regarding the monastic figures mentioned in them, including the Origenist controversy at the end of the fourth

25 The extent of bilingualism in Roman Egypt in this period remains a disputed point. For a recent survey of the evidence, see BAGNALL, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 230-260. Bagnall concludes: «the very absence of any sign of difficulty in daily communication suggests strongly that there were enough bilingual people in both milieus that normally inconvenience was minimal» (p. 259). For a more nuanced discussion of the notion of bilingualism in Roman Egypt, see now P. FEWSTER, «Bilingualism in Roman Egypt», in *Bilingualism in Ancient Society. Language Contact and the Written Text*, ed. J.N. Adams - M. Janse - S. Swain, Oxford 2002, 220-245.

26 See, for example, the mention of interpreters in *Vit. Ant.* 72, in Cassian, *Conl.* 16.I.1. Cassian notes that the monk Joseph did not need an interpreter as did many others because he was bilingual. See also BAGNALL, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 233-264. According to the *Vita prima graeca* of Pachomius (§§94-95), a Theodore of Alexandria had entered the community at least 13 years before the death of Pachomius. The account states that Pachomius put him in a house together with an elderly monk who knew Greek until he learned Coptic. It says moreover that Pachomius himself tried to learn Greek so as to be able to encourage him and that later he named him head of the house of the Alexandrians and foreigners. See also J. E. GOEHRING, *The Letter of Ammon and Pachomian Monasticism* (Patristische Texte und Studien 27), Berlin-New York 1986, 209.

27 For a list and an evaluation of the authenticity of these, see D.B. BRAKKE, «The Authenticity of the Ascetic Athanasiana», *Orientalia* 63 (1994) 17-56. On the role of Athanasius in the development of Egyptian monasticism, see D. BRAKKE, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* (Oxford Early Christian Studies), Oxford 1995, and A. MARTIN, *Athanase d'Alexandrie et l'Église d'Égypte au IV^e siècle (328-373)*, (Collection de l'École Française de Rome 216), Roma 1996.

century.²⁸ None of the various compilations of the *Apophthegmata* can be dated earlier than the second half of the fifth century. The formation and evolution of the Pachomian literature, above all of the various lives of Pachomius and his successors, in Greek and Coptic, continued for an even longer period. The numerous writings of Shenute constitute another source, which has until now been insufficiently explored. Certain recent publications have made many of them accessible.²⁹

Finally the works of John Cassian, which properly belong to Latin monasticism, should be included. Since these were produced for Latin-speaking Western monks, they have to be evaluated with great caution before they can be drawn upon as reliable sources for the study of Egyptian monasticism. Nevertheless, the evidence of John Cassian remains important for knowledge of the spiritual world of Egyptian monasticism: according to his explicit testimony, he spent many years in Egypt and knew well the monasticism of lower Egypt, Scetis especially.

1.4 The reading matter of monks

In order to understand the spiritual and intellectual world of the Egyptian monks of the fourth century, it is helpful for us to have knowledge not only of the literature produced by them and about them, but also what they read. Therefore it is necessary to consider the controverted question of the monks' level of education. It is often said, without proof and without reference to the available sources, that most monks were illiterate.³⁰ This statement contradicts the explicit instructions

28 See the review by L.-TH. LEFORT, *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 33 (1937) 341-348, of the work by K. HEUSSI, *Der Ursprung des Mönchtums*, Tübingen 1936. The strong criticism voiced by Lefort against the use of the *Apophthegmata* as a historical source for fourth century Egyptian monasticism remains as valid today as it was seventy-five years ago. Lefort accurately predicted that they would continue to be used as such despite the objections raised against this procedure.

29 In addition to the work of Emmel cited above (n. 14), see J. TIMBIE, «The State of Research on the Career of Shenoute of Atripe», in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*, ed. B.A. Pearson - J.E. Goehring, Philadelphia 1986, 258-270. Newly published texts and translations may be found in D.W. YOUNG, *Coptic Manuscripts from the White Monastery: Works of Shenute* (Mitteilungen aus der Papyrussammlung der österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, Neue Serie, XXII. Folge. 2 Bde), Wien 1993 and A.I. ELANSKAYA, *The Literary Coptic Manuscripts in the A.S. Pushkin State Fine Arts Museum in Moscow*, (Vigiliae Christianae, Supplements, 18), Leiden 1994.

30 For example, HEUSSI, *Der Ursprung*, 278: «Die Mehrzahl der Mönche wird aus Analphabeten bestanden haben». Similarly A.-J. FESTUGIÈRE, *Les Moines d'Orient. I. Culture ou*

of the Pachomian Rules which insists on the fact that all should learn to read, as well as the general tenet which considered reading a spiritual exercise, part of ascetic practice.³¹ The existence of a great deal of Coptic literature, besides what we know about the many monastic libraries, also attests to the contrary. On the basis of all the evidence the ability to read seems to have been common enough in fourth century Egypt, above all in monasteries and among monks.³²

Rather more difficult than making a compilation of literary sources which mention monks is knowing what monks read: studies on this subject are rare. About seventy years ago W. E. Crum published an investigation of evidence from the semi-anchoritic monastery of Epiphanius of Thebes, which remains an exemplar for studies of this kind.³³ Crum employed three criteria: 1) the re-

sainteté. Introduction au monachisme orientale, Paris 1961, 77, and CHITTY, *The Desert a City*, 86. For the contrary view, see E. WIPSZYCKA, «Le degré d'alphabétisation en Egypte byzantine», *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 30 (1984) 279-296. W.V. HARRIS, *Ancient Literacy*, Cambridge, Mass. 1989, 303, contradicts Wipszycka's assertion (p. 293) that monks must have been able to read the Bible but without offering any evidence other than the general picture provided by the *Apophthegmata*, a notable case of misuse of the sources. Harris also mistakenly assumes that Antony was illiterate and as such represented an ideal. This is a misreading and misunderstanding of Athanasius. See the following note.

- 31 For the Pachomian evidence see below, pp. 82-86. In the *Vita Antonii* (4,1), Athanasius portrays Antony as seeking to learn different aspects of the ascetic life from different zealous men in the area. Among these elements of askesis is «love of study» (φιλολογεῖν). The word had already acquired the sense of reading or studying the Bible in Christian circles. See K. GIRARDET, «Philologos und philologeïn», *Kleronomia* 2 (1970) 323-333. Athanasius also has Antony recommend to monks that each one should examine should examine his actions and his thoughts daily and write them down (55,9). Athanasius also tells virgins that they should imitate the Virgin Mary who, instead of looking out the window, was engaged in reading the Scriptures: ATHANASE, «Lettre aux vierges», in ATHANASE, *Lettres festales et pastorales en copte* (CSCO 150, 151, *Scriptores coptici* 19, 20), ed. L.-Th. Lefort, Louvain 1955, CSCO 150, 78 (text); CSCO 151, 60 (translation).
- 32 For a balanced summary of the evidence, see BAGNALL, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 258-260. Bagnall concludes «Literacy was widespread, far more so than before the arrival of the Greeks, but it never approached universality» (p.60). See also the observations of E. WIPSZYCKA, «Le monachisme égyptien et les villes», in *Travaux et Mémoires* 12 (Collège de France. Centre de recherche d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance), Paris 1994, 40-43. Wipszycka notes that the assertion of the historian Socrates that the majority of the monks were illiterate cannot be taken at face value, since Socrates had no direct knowledge of the situation. His assertion is in reference to the role of the monks in the Origenist controversy. Socrates was, however, a partisan of Origen and had an interest in representing the opponents of Origen as illiterate. In fact, the division for and against Origen did not coincide at all with the distinction of educated and non-educated.
- 33 H.E. WINLOCK - W.E. CRUM, *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes* 1, New York 1926, 196-208.

mains of manuscripts or earthenware containing fragments of written works; 2) ancient lists of books found in the documents; 3) quotations or references to other works in letters and homilies written in that place. Despite the scarcity of evidence, the results of this research were quite rewarding. Apart from biblical and liturgical works, the list included homiletical works by Athanasius, Basil, Cyril, Damian, Isaiah, Evagrius, John Chrysostom, Pachomius, Shenute, Severus of Antioch and Gregory of Nyssa, to mention only the most noteworthy. According to Crum, the number of books available to these anchorites was probably small. A large cenobitic monastery would have had a much better equipped library. It was not possible to determine whether these hermits were able to obtain books from the libraries of larger monasteries. This investigation at least gives us a good idea of the writings in circulation among hermits at the end of the sixth century in the area around Thebes (modern Luxor).

Obviously many works available to this group of anchorites at the end of the sixth century had not yet been written in the early days of monasticism in the fourth century, or were to be written in the second half of the fourth century. Besides, many other works which have not come down to us were in circulation among the monks of the fourth century. For instance, Palladius tells us that Ammonas, one of the «Tall Brothers», had read «six hundred times ten thousand lines» of the works of Origen, Didymus, Pierius and Stephen, among others. The works of these last two have been lost, apart from scattered quotations. A large amount of earlier Greek patristic literature, including the works of Justin and Clement, was in circulation in Egypt in the fourth century. Monks able to read Greek (among them bilingual Copts) would have had access to this literature. It is more difficult to determine what was available in Coptic at that time, whether original works or translations. At all events, the material available in Coptic included all or most of the Old Testament, the New Testament, the apocryphal writings,³⁴ the works of Athanasius, the letters of Antony, some of the Pachomian literature,³⁵ the works of Paul of Tamma. Many other works, not all of them Christian, were in circulation in Coptic and in Greek in the fourth century, as is made evident by the libraries of Nag Hammadi and the Manichaean literature. Whether monks would have read such works still remains a much debated question.³⁶ A few indications of doubt-

34 For a list, see ORLANDI, «La patrologia copta», 466-469.

35 ORLANDI, «La patrologia copta», 473-481.

36 A. VEILLEUX, «Monasticism and Gnosis in Egypt», in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity* (ed. B.A. Pearson - J.E. Goehring, Philadelphia 1986, 271-306. A. KHOSROYEV, *Die*

ful validity may be deduced from the contents of the monastic libraries from which most of the extant Coptic manuscripts come.³⁷ However, the fact that a work has not survived in Coptic still leaves open the possibility that once it did exist and was read in the early centuries. The survival of Coptic writings, like all writings from Antiquity, has crucially depended on conditions prevalent in centuries later than those in which they were produced.³⁸ Most of the manuscripts come from a later period, mainly from the ninth and tenth centuries. The contents of these medieval libraries reflect the conditions, needs and tastes of that time, the decline in the knowledge of Greek in that late period, and possibly even earlier. The monastic libraries of the White Monastery, the Monastery of St. Michael the Archangel in the Fayum and the monasteries of Edfu are almost totally in Coptic, whereas libraries of an earlier period may well also have contained many works in Greek, at least texts which were to be translated into Coptic. Thus the works of Origen and Didymus found at Tura, which probably come from the monastery of Arsenius, are evidence of their circulation in monastic circles.³⁹ These manuscripts date from the fifth or

Bibliothek von Nag Hammadi. Einige Probleme des Christentums in Ägypten während der ersten Jahrhunderte (Arbeiten zum spätantiken und koptischen Ägypten 7), Altenberge 1995, has argued convincingly against the monastic origin of the library. E. WIPSZYCKA, «The Nag Hammadi Library and the Monks: A Papyrologist's Point of View», *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 30 (2000) 179-191, has shown that the few scraps of monastic provenance found in the cartonnage of one volume are probably the result of the used paper trade.

37 M. KRAUSE, «Libraries», in *The Coptic Encyclopedia* 5, ed. A. Atiya, New York 1991, 1447-1450.

38 See the pertinent observations of WIPSZYCKA, «Le monachisme égyptien et les villes», 43. What survived depended in fact upon the conditions of at least two distinct periods, the period when the literature was copied (what was selected then for preservation) and the still later period when what had been copied fell into neglect and decay. See also H. HYVERNAT, «Pourquoi les anciennes Collections de Manuscrits Coptes sont si pauvres», *Revue Biblique* 2s. 10 (1913) 422-428.

39 The anti-Origenist polemic to be found in later Coptic sources is no indication of what the monks of the fourth century thought or read. See J.M. SHERIDAN, *Rufus of Shotep. Homilies on the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Introduction, Text, Translation, Commentary* (Unione Accademica Nazionale, Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari), Roma 1998, 304-306. According to the well-known charges of Epiphanius, Origenism was diffused not only among the ascetics of Lower Egypt but in the Thebaid as well (*Ancoratus* 82, 3: ὥς καὶ προσφάτως πάλιν ἀκούομέν τινων τῶν τὰ πρωτεῖα δοκούντων ἀποφέρεσθαι παρὰ τισι τῶν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ ἀσκητῶν καὶ Θηβαΐδος καὶ ἄλλων ἄλλοθι κλιμάτων. EPIPHANIUS, *Ancoratus und Panarion* 1 (GCS 25), ed. K. Holl, Leipzig 1915, 1-149. See J.F. DECHOW, *Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity: Epiphanius of Cyprus and the Legacy of Origen* (North American Patristic Society Patristic Monograph Series 13), Macon, Ga. 1988. In fact anti-

sixth centuries. Fragments which come from the monastery of Deir el-Bala'izah from the eighth century show a proportion of 85% in Coptic, 9% in Greek and 6% in Arabic.⁴⁰ The Bodmer papyri (4-5th century), while having nothing in Arabic, have a higher proportion of texts in Greek (39%) and a lower in Coptic (58%).⁴¹ Neither the Bodmer collection nor the Nag Hammadi library are specifically of monastic provenance, but they give something of an idea of the works in private circulation in Upper Egypt. All the indications suggest that Egypt was quite well supplied with books in the fourth century. Apart from the celebrated libraries of Alexandria, there were libraries also in other important centers.⁴²

The case of Didymus the Blind, even if it is extraordinary, is particularly significant for the light it sheds on certain aspects of early Egyptian monasticism. He was blind from the age of four, but still acquired a good classical education and possessed an exceptional memory. Palladius, who visited him four times within ten years, thought of him as a monk, and mentions that even the great Antony had visited him.⁴³ Rufinus, who attended Didymus' lectures in 372, tells us that he had a profound knowledge of dialectics, geometry, astronomy and mathematics.⁴⁴ He was famous for having composed many commentaries on the Scriptures and on the *De Principiis* of Origen.⁴⁵ His extant exegetical works show him to have been very conversant with the earlier exegetical tradition and

Origenism among monks seems to have been a late-fourth century phenomenon on (introduced by outside provocateurs) whose roots are to be found in Alexandria and elsewhere. See E. JUNOD, «L'Apologie pour Origène de Pamphile et la naissance de l'origénisme», in *Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference on Patristic Studies* (Studia Patristica 26), Louvain 1993, 267-286.

40 P.E. KAHLE, *Bala'izah. Coptic Texts from Deir el-Bala'izah in Upper Egypt 1-2*, London 1954, 8.

41 See R. KASSER, «Bodmer Papyri», in *The Coptic Encyclopedia* 8, ed. A. Atiya; New York 1991, 48-53. The hypothesis proposed by J.M. ROBINSON, that these papyri are the remains of the library of the Pachomian monastery of Faw, is not accepted by Kasser, who regards them as more likely the contents of a private library. See J.M. ROBINSON, «The First Christian Monastic Library», in *Coptic Studies: Acts of the Third International Congress of Coptic Studies, Warsaw, 20-25 August, 1984*, ed. W. Godlewski, Warsaw 1990, 371-378. These manuscripts are in any case good evidence for the bilingual (or multilingual, for 3% are Latin texts) character of late Roman Egypt.

42 BAGNALL, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 100.

43 PALLADIUS, *Hist. Laus.* 4.

44 RUFINUS, *Hist. eccles.* II,7.

45 SOCRATES, *Hist. eccles.* IV,25.

the works of Philo.⁴⁶ All this had been made possible for him due to the help of others: those who read to him, those whose lectures he attended, and the scribes who wrote for him. Granted that Didymus was an extraordinary figure, he reflects a culture in which not only the written word but also the word read aloud (whether in public or in private), and lectures commenting on written texts, played a central role. In Didymus' case it was possible to acquire the equivalent of a high level of education without ever having read or written a single line. Others would have been able to achieve something similar, even if to a more modest degree.

1.5 Various interpretations of Egyptian monasticism

Nearly a century ago the eminent scholar Karl Holl published a study of Greek monasticism in which he noted that church historians, not to mention secular historians, failed to treat very sympathetically Greek monasticism.⁴⁷ In Holl's view monasticism can be understood only from the perspective of an inner, spiritual vision. Taking as his starting point Athanasius' *Vita Antonii*, he showed that Athanasius precisely sought to represent the development of the interior life, in Antony's spiritual evolution which was to become the paradigm of the whole of Greek monasticism. Antony's aim was to attain spiritual perfection in order to become worthy of the kingdom of heaven. In order to do this, he began to pay close attention to his own thoughts and actions, while still living near his home village, endeavoring to acquire virtues he observed in others, and seeking communion with God through prayer. Then followed his long battle against temptations and demons until he attained invincible peace of heart. He dedicated his life totally to the search for inner healing, an austere and disciplined life by means of which the soul becomes free to enjoy continual contemplation of God. Thus, Holl concludes, this is the ideal which the *Vita Antonii* represents.⁴⁸ The picture of Antony's spiritual development which Athanasius offers, and his subsequent role in society as a man of wis-

46 See D.T. RUNIA, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey* (Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum), Minneapolis 1993, 197-204. Didymus makes numerous explicit references to Philo.

47 K. HOLL, «Über das griechische Mönchtum», in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte* 2, Tübingen 1928, 270-282. The essay was originally published in 1898.

48 HOLL, «Über das griechische Mönchtum», 271.

dom, consoler and healer, Holl affirms, is not at all legendary, but is confirmed by historical proofs.⁴⁹

During the last hundred years many other interpretations of early monasticism have been put forward, attempting to find an underlying unity in the diverse forms and practices of early monasticism. For example, according to J. Leipoldt, early Christian asceticism essentially derives from the influence of Greek philosophy.⁵⁰ Contrary to Heussi, in whose opinion the essential elements of asceticism were a development of fundamental aspects of Christianity itself, Leipoldt argues that they emerged from Greek philosophy.⁵¹ Among such essential features he would include the very idea of ascesis, the notion of voluntary poverty, the sharing of goods (Jamblicus) and the quest for inner freedom. Celibacy and the eremitical life also appear in philosophical writings. Leipoldt also noted the influence of the Greek philosophic ascetic ideal on Philo, and maintained that by 200 A. D. Christianity was becoming a community of ascetics.⁵² According to him, Antony, as he appears in the *Vita Antonii*, is the realization of the Greek ideal of the «philosophic life». In other words, every aspect of the monastic life, the use of distinctive clothing, the aim of the subjection of the body, the notion of inner warfare, the idea of monastic life as the «philosophic life», and the whole terminology of asceticism, may be traced back to Greek philosophic thought.⁵³

In a study of the origins of monasticism published forty years ago, W. Schneemelcher addressed the question of whether the decisive impetus for the birth of monasticism came from outside Christianity including possible influences from Qumran, or developed within the Church.⁵⁴ He rejected the first

49 HOLL, «Über das griechische Mönchtum», 274. In the intervening years much has been written on the question of the historical value of the details to be found in the *Vita Antonii*. See among others: K. HEUSSI, *Der Ursprung des Mönchtums*, Tübingen 1936, 87-108; H. DÖRRIES, «Die Vita Antonii als Geschichtsquelle», in *Wort und Stunde. Erster Band. Gesammelte Studien zur Kirchengeschichte des vierten Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen, 1966, 145-224; A. GUILLAUMONT, «Antony of Egypt», in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, New York 1991, 148-150; *Vie d'Antoine* (SCH 400), ed. G.J.M. Bartelink, Paris 1994. As Bartelink (p. 42) notes, it is practically impossible to detach the facts from Athanasius' own ideas.

50 J. LEIPOLDT, *Griechische Philosophie und Frühchristliche Askese*, Berlin 1961, 1-67.

51 LEIPOLDT, *Griechische Philosophie*, 61.

52 LEIPOLDT, *Griechische Philosophie*, 42.

53 LEIPOLDT, *Griechische Philosophie*, 60-63.

54 W. SCHNEEMELCHER, «Erwägungen zu dem Ursprung des Mönchtums in Aegypten», in *Christentum am Nil*, ed. K. Wessel, Recklinghausen 1964, 131-141.

possibility, while understanding it to have included possible influences from Qumran, and then asked again if it would be better to consider the development of monasticism principally to be a response to the new situation of the Church in the fourth century. Thus, it would have been the result of the increasing influence of the state in ecclesiastical matters, and, above all, the development of Alexandrian theology. Schneemelcher concluded that the exterior conditions of the time were insufficient explanation for the growth of monasticism. Of much greater importance was the fact that the ascetic life was seen as a carrying out of Scriptural counsels. The great Alexandrian theologians, Clement, and above all, Origen, whose influence, transmitted through many channels, prepared the theological basis for a highly-valued ascetic life and deeply impressed Christian thought.⁵⁵

According to A. Guillaumont, understanding it as a search for inner union provides some coherence in the monastic movement.⁵⁶ The ideal of the attainment of integration in one's manner of life, devoting oneself entirely to the service of God, is rooted in the Bible. At the same time, it converges with the Hellenistic notion of union with God which is found in Plato, Plotinus and the gnostic systems. From the perspective of this search for inner wholeness, the other principal aspects of monasticism, such as celibacy, renunciation and asceticism, emerge. The choice of celibacy is based on the desire to remain undivided by the preoccupations of this world, according to the teaching of St. Paul (1 Cor 7:32f). However, it is possible also to regard celibacy as an aspect of the fundamental monastic option of renunciation (*ἀποτάξις*) of the world and of everything which belongs to the life of the world. *Anachoresis* (the anchoritic life) is the consequent desire to put oneself at a distance from everything one has renounced. Guillaumont notes that although monasticism could take very different exterior forms, inner integration is the aim that all these seek to realize and constitutes the essential character of monasticism. The texts on which he bases his opinion are mainly of Greek provenance - the *Vita Antonii*, Evagrius, Basil, Isaias of Scetis and Pseudo-Macarius. This ideal of the ascetic life is, as well, to be found in the Syriac-speaking world.

55 SCHNEEMELCHER, «Erwägungen zu dem Ursprung des Mönchtums in Aegypten», 140.

56 A. GUILLAUMONT, «Esquisse d'une phénoménologie du monachisme», in *Aux origines du Monachisme chrétien: Pour une phénoménologie du monachisme* (Spiritualité Orientale 30), Bégrolles en Mauges 1979, 228-239.

A very different interpretation of early Coptic monasticism has been put forward by T. Baumeister.⁵⁷ Having rejected the *Vita Antonii*, on the grounds that it is an expression of Athanasian theology rather than a reliable biographical presentation of the hermit Antony, and the letters of Antony on the grounds that their attribution to Antony is uncertain, he directed his attention to the sayings of Antony found in the *Apophthegmata* as the principal and more trustworthy source for discovering the historical Antony and his «mentality». Using this doubtful methodology,⁵⁸ Baumeister comes to the conclusion that for Antony there was no deeper meaning of Scripture to be sought, as Alexandrian allegory proposed. According to Baumeister Antony's chosen way of being was neither a search for perfection undertaken in separation from the things of this world, nor did it represent a fundamental notion of degrees in spiritual progress. Rather, Antony's manner of life and his spiritual stance were one among other possible forms of religious practice among country people influenced by the whole of Christian asceticism. This approach to early Coptic monasticism leaves important issues of religious practice and asceticism unclear. The author maintains that hermits brought with them into the desert their own wisdom, gained from their experience of life (*Lebensweisheit*), which in turn was refashioned by their new experiences. In this context there gradually developed a spirituality and way of life based on the alternation of work and prayer. Guidelines for the anchoritic life were sought in the Scriptures.

Having set aside Pachomian literature's links to Alexandrian spiritual theology and interest in allegorical exegesis, on the grounds that these were later developments, Baumeister is then able to depict early Pachomian monasticism in a similar way.⁵⁹ In these writings, the notion of the monastic life as the angelic life (βίος ἀγγελικός) would seem not to play a significant role, thereby exhibiting an important difference from monastic spirituality of an Hellenistic type. Rather, relying on ecclesiological teachings found in the Scriptures, the Pachomians developed a theology of community according to which, employing Biblical imag-

57 T. BAUMEISTER, «Die Mentalität des frühen ägyptischen Mönchtums. Zur Frage der Ursprünge des christlichen Mönchtums», *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 88 (1977) 145-160.

58 Lefort had already offered incisive criticism of this approach. See note 27 above. For a different analysis of the apophthegmata regarding Antony, see S. RUBENSON, *The Letters of St. Antony. Origenist Theology, Monastic Tradition and the Making of a Saint* (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity), Minneapolis 1995, 159-160.

59 BAUMEISTER, «Die Mentalität», 154-155. His principal source here is the *Liber Horsiesii*.

ery, the monastic community was seen as a church-in-miniature.⁶⁰ Basing himself on these observations, Baumeister asserts that to trace back the origins of Egyptian monasticism to Alexandrian theology is mistaken. The cases of both Antony and Pachomius are seen, rather, as the simple spirituality of country people, without the slightest trace of a theology of perfection or of an allegorical interpretation of Scripture.⁶¹

2. SPIRITUAL AND INTELLECTUAL LIFE IN THREE DIFFERENT MONASTIC ENVIRONMENTS

Keeping in mind these contrasting points of view, it may be useful to examine in particular key terms in the monastic vocabulary and monastic interpretation of Scripture in three different settings: Antony, Paul of Tamma and Pachomius and his successors.

2.1 Athanasius and Antony

A suitable starting point from which to begin to describe the spiritual vision of early Egyptian monasticism is also the most well known of all the classic monastic texts, Athanasius' *Vita Antonii*, a work written the year after Antony's death (356) and ten years after the death of Pachomius. This work, produced when the monastic movement had already attracted thousands of followers in Egypt, and written by the most influential ecclesiastic then in the public eye, a man who had known Antony, as well as the monastic movement generally, was destined to greatly influence the development of the monastic tradition.⁶² The German historian Adolf Harnack has highlighted the importance of this book, judging it to be the most disastrous book ever written.⁶³ It was by no means the first work of monastic literature, nor was it the first of Athanasius' ascetic writings.⁶⁴ It had been preceded by the letters of Antony and Pachomius, but the *Vita Antonii*

60 BAUMEISTER, «Die Mentalität», 157.

61 BAUMEISTER, «Die Mentalität», 158.

62 The recent critical edition by G.J.M. Bartelink replaces the previous one by Montfaucon: ATHANASE D'ALEXANDRIE, *Vie d'Antoine* (SCh 400), ed. G.J.M. Bartelink, Paris 1994. For a recent discussion of the form and contents of this work, see VOGÜÉ, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'Antiquité* 1, 17-80.

63 A. VON HARNACK, *Das Leben Cyprians von Pontus. Die erste christliche Biographie* (TU 39.3), Leipzig 1913, 81.

64 Cf. BRAKKE, *The Authenticity of the Ascetic Athanasiana*, 17-56.

was soon translated into other languages, including Coptic, and thus became a model for later hagiographical literature in Coptic as well as Greek. Of course, the work reflects also the monastic movement's impact on Athanasius.

Athanasius' description of Antony's initial decision to follow an ascetic way of life is of particular importance for understanding his concept of monastic life. Inspired by the example of the early Christians and by the words of Jesus in the Gospel «If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you own, give it to the poor and you shall have treasure in heaven; then come and follow me» (*Matt* 19:21), Antony sold his inheritance, distributed the proceeds to the poor, and entrusted his sister to a community of virgins. Then Antony «dedicated himself to the ascetic life within the precincts of his own home, keeping watch over himself and subjecting himself to a demanding discipline. For at that time, indeed, there were not yet many monasteries in Egypt and monks did not yet know the great desert: whoever wanted to practice mindfulness over his own life used to dedicate himself to ascetic practice in solitude not far from his own village».⁶⁵ In this passage Athanasius introduces two technical terms each with a long and distinguished history in philosophical and religious usage: προσοχή (*prosoche*) and ἄσκησις (*askesis*).

2.1.1 *Prosoche*

Prosoche can be translated as «attention to oneself» or «being vigilant over oneself». It is found in the Scriptures in the form of a verbal admonition.⁶⁶ Philo of Alexandria uses it to describe the ascetic practice of the patriarch Jacob.⁶⁷ Clement of Alexandria and Origen see it as an essential element in the development of the spiritual life, a continual concentration on the present moment, which must be lived as if it were the first and the last; in this way *prosoche* is closely linked to mindfulness of death. In ch. 19 of the *Vita Antonii* Antony quotes Paul saying «I die daily» (*1Cor* 15:31) and adds «If we practice in this way and live like this day by day, we shall not sin». The word also means living

65 *Vit. Ant.* 3, 1-2: αὐτὸς πρὸ τῆς οἰκίας ἐσχόλαζε λοιπὸν τῇ ἀσκήσει, προσέχων ἑαυτῷ καὶ καρτερικῶς ἑαυτὸν ἄγων. 2. Οὕτω γὰρ ἦν οὕτως ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ συνεχῇ μοναστήρια οὐδ' ὅλως ἦδει μοναχὸς τὴν μακρὰν ἔρημον. Ἐκαστος δὲ τῶν βουλομένων ἑαυτῷ προσέχειν οὐ μακρὰν τῆς ἰδίας κόμης καταμόνας ἡσκεῖτο.

66 E.g., *Deut* 4:23; 8:1; *Prov* 2:1; 4:1, 20. See R. VERNAY, «Attention», in *Dictionnaire de la Spiritualité* 1, Paris 1937, 1058-1077.

67 For Philo it is a spiritual exercise, a part of askesis: *Quis heres.* 253: πάντα γὰρ τὰ τῆς ἀσκήσεως ἐδώδιμα καθέστηκεν, ἡ ζήτησις, ἡ σκέψις, ἡ ἀνάγνωσις, ἡ ἀκρόασις, ἡ προσοχή, ἡ ἐγκράτεια, ἡ ἐξαδιαφόρησις τῶν ἀδιαφόρων.

constantly in the presence of God with the awareness of the presence of God. This attitude of vigilance was also the fundamentally characteristic spiritual attitude of the Stoic philosophers. One could cite numerous passages from the writings of Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius as well as the Platonist Porphyry, on the subject of the need to keep in mind the thought of death (as a moral incentive) and of living in the presence of God.⁶⁸ Athanasius concludes his work with the same thought. Shortly before his death, Antony exhorts his disciples: «Live as if you were about to die each day, keep watch over yourselves and remember the instructions which you have heard from me».⁶⁹

An examination of Antony's letters, which even until very recently have not been given the attention they deserve, confirms that this was the teaching of the historical Antony and not merely an ideal attributed by his biographer.⁷⁰ Among the most notable characteristics of these letters is the repetition of the counsel «know yourself».⁷¹ This ancient Greek aphorism, originally attributed to the Delphic oracle, was already understood as equivalent to the philosophical and Biblical notion of *prosoche* in the writings of Philo.⁷² Among the Christian writers both before and after Antony who were to make use of this theme, is Origen, who in his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, distinguishes two types of knowing oneself.⁷³ The first, on the ethical-moral plane, comes about when a person recognizes his or her own failings and the need for improvement. The second has rather to do with the realization of our true spiritual nature and of our position in the universe as created beings.⁷⁴ Both aspects are found also in the letters of Antony.⁷⁵

68 For a discussion of the similarities between the philosophical and monastic literature on these points and numerous references to the philosophical literature, see P. HADOT, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*, Paris 1987, 59-74.

69 *Vit. Ant.* 91: Καὶ ὡς καθ' ἡμέραν ἀποθνῆσκοντες ζήσατε, προσέχοντες ἑαυτοῖς καὶ μνημονεύοντες ὧν ἠκούσατε παρ' ἐμοῦ παραινέσεων.

70 The most recent and thorough study of the letters is to be found in S. RUBENSON, *The Letters of St. Antony. Origenist Theology, Monastic Tradition and the Making of a Saint* (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity), Minneapolis 1995. The critical edition of the Georgian version with a Latin translation may be found in G. GARITTE, *Lettres de Saint Antoine. Version géorgienne et fragments coptes* (CSCO 148 - 149), Louvain 1955.

71 The injunction is found in Letters 2, 4, 5, 6, 7.

72 See *Migr.* 8.2.

73 The most extensive treatment of the subject is to be found in P. COURCELLE, *Connais-toi toi-même I-3* (Études Augustiniennes), Paris 1974-1975.

74 See ORIGEN, *ComCt* II (1,8).

75 On the theme in Antony's letters, see also G. COUILLEAU, «La liberté d'Antoine», in *Commandements du Seigneur et libération évangélique* (SA 70), Roma 1977, 17.

2.1.2 *Askesis*

The second technical term introduced by Athanasius to describe Antony's practice as a monk is *askesis* (ἄσκησις). This word, the corresponding verb to which is ἀσκεῖν, is difficult to translate adequately because its common usage in modern everyday European languages carries a negative meaning. Generally it is used to signify not doing something, and indicates abnegation and physical austerity.⁷⁶ In the context of early monasticism, a translation as «spiritual practice» would be preferable, not in order to deny its aspect of abnegation or of physical austerity, but in order to emphasize its spiritual or intellectual aspect. The original meaning in the monastic context may best be illustrated by examining the underlying metaphor of the monk as athlete. In the *Contra Celsum* Origen tried to refute the view, held by the pagan author Celsus, that people are incapable of progress, by comparing the moral situation to that of an athlete. Just as person is capable of training to become a good tightrope-walker through attention and practice, so also in the ethical-moral sphere virtue may be acquired through prolonged attention and practice.⁷⁷ Origen signified attention and practice by *prosoche* and *askesis*. *Askesis* in its original meaning signifies the training program of an athlete. On the spiritual plane it signifies the training program, the

76 As an example, the *Oxford English Dictionary* s.v. ascetic: the exercise of extremely rigorous self-discipline; severely abstinent, austere. Modern historical writers often use the word in this negative modern sense, which often has little to do with the use of the Greek word in antiquity. For example Heussi: «Verstehen wir unter Askese jede religiös begründete Enthaltung oder Einschränkung von Speise und Trank, Wohnung und Schlaf, Kleidung und jeglichem Besitz, vornehmlich die Enthaltensamkeit im engern Sinn, den zeitweiligen oder völligen Verzicht auf den Geschlechtsverkehr...». HEUSSI, *Der Ursprung des Mönchtums*, 13. This definition is adopted also by P. NAGEL, *Die Motivierung der Askese in der alten Kirche und der Ursprung des Mönchtums* (TU 95), Berlin 1966, 1. In fact this meaning corresponds more to the content of the Greek ἀποταγή/, ἀπόταξις, ἀποτάσσω (renounce) than to the Greek notion of ἄσκησις.

77 See ORIGEN, *CCels* 3,69: Εἰ δὲ καὶ τισι πάνυ χαλεπὸν ἐστὶ τὸ μεταβάλλειν, τὴν αἰτίαν λεκτέον εἶναι περὶ τὴν συγκατάθεσιν αὐτῶν, ὁκνοῦσαν παραδέξασθαι τὸν ἐπὶ πᾶσι θεὸν εἶναι ἐκάστῳ δίκαιον κριτὴν περὶ πάντων τῶν ἐν τῷ βίῳ πεπραγμένων. Μέγα γὰρ δύναται καὶ πρὸς τὰ δοκοῦντα εἶναι χαλεπώτατα καί, ἵνα καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ὀνομάσω, ἐγγὺς ποῦ ἀδύνατα προαίρεσις καὶ ἄσκησις. Ἡ βουλευθεῖσα ἀνθρωπίνη φύσις ἐπὶ κάλου βαίνειν, τεταμένῃ διὰ μέσου τοῦ θεάτρου ἐν μετεώρῳ, καὶ μετὰ τοῦ φέρειν τοσαῦτα καὶ τηλικαῦτα βάρη δεδύνηται τῇ ἀσκήσει καὶ τῇ προσοχῇ τὸ τοιοῦτο ποιῆσαι· βουλευθεῖσα δὲ κατ' ἀρετὴν βιώσαι ἀδυνάτως ἔχει, κἂν ἢ πρότερον φαυλοτάτῃ γεγεννημένη; Ἀλλ' ὅρα μὴ ποτε ὁ τὰ τοιαῦτα λέγων τῇ δημιουργῷ τοῦ λογικοῦ ζῴου φύσει ἐγκαλεῖ μᾶλλον ἢ τῷ γεγεννημένῳ, εἰ πρὸς μὲν τὰ οὕτω χαλεπὰ οὐδαμῶς ὄντα χρήσιμα πεποίηκε δυνατόν τὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου φύσιν, ἀδύνατον δὲ πρὸς τὴν ἰδίαν μακαριότητα. Ἀλλὰ γὰρ ἀρκεῖ καὶ ταῦτα πρὸς τὸ φύσιν γὰρ ἀμείψαι τελῶς παγγάλεπον.

spiritual exercises, of the spiritual athlete. The image of an athlete becomes a commonplace to describe the monk and it included the notion of *askesis*. For Athanasius, *askesis* signifies the search for moral perfection or virtue by means of various exercises, in order to offer service to God (or in order to be pleasing to God).⁷⁸ At the beginning of the Prologue to the *Vita Antonii*, Athanasius uses the term to indicate the practice of virtue and later declares that the Lord had protected Antony from being martyred in order to make of him a teacher of the ascetic life, which he had learned from the Scriptures.⁷⁹ At the same time, Athanasius also says that as a young man Antony had sought to learn as much as he could about the practice of virtue and spiritual exercise, that is, about *askesis*, from old men who practiced the ascetic life. Among the qualities and practices mentioned we find amiability, diligent attention in prayer, gentleness, devotion to Christ and mutual love.⁸⁰ According to Athanasius, Antony strove to realize in himself the virtues of all as part of his ascesis.

Antony also practiced physical asceticism: fasting, abstinence from meat and wine, night vigils, and sleeping on the bare earth.⁸¹ However, this physical asceticism was practiced in the interests of the spirit and not because austerity and abnegation were ends in themselves, nor because the body was considered to be in itself bad. The aim of physical austerity was to strengthen the spirit. Athanasius relates that Antony used to say «the spirit is strong when the pleasures of the body become weaker».⁸²

2.1.3 Jacob/Israel

The notion of *askesis* as spiritual exercise and the image of the spiritual athlete are first found in an exegetical context in the writings of Philo, who gave an

78 See L.T.A. LORIÉ, *Spiritual Terminology in the Latin Translations of the Vita Antonii with reference to fourth and fifth century monastic literature*, Utrecht 1955, 65-69. On the history and usage of the word, see also: J. GRIBOMONT, «Askese. IV. Neues Testament und Alte Kirche», in *Theologische Realenzyklopedie* 4, Berlin 1979, 204-225 and J. DE GUIBERT - M. OLPHE-GAILLARD, «Ascèse, Ascétisme», in *Dictionnaire de la Spiritualité* 1, Paris 1937, 936-977. Couilleau («La liberté d'Antoine», 29, n.52) notes that the word enters Christian literature in force with the *Vita Antonii*. Athanasius uses it 38 times.

79 *Vit. Ant.* 46: ὁ δὲ Κύριος ἦν αὐτὸν φυλάττων εἰς τὴν ἡμῶν καὶ τὴν ἐτέρων ὠφέλειαν, ἵνα καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀσκήσει, ἣν αὐτὸς ἐκ τῶν γραφῶν μεμάθηκεν, πολλοῖς διδάσκαλος γένηται.

80 *Vit. Ant.* 3-4.

81 *Vit. Ant.* 7,6-8.

82 *Vit. Ant.* 7,9.

allegorical interpretation of the figure of Jacob as a symbol of the active moral athlete or ascetic who strove to overcome the passions. Philo describes Jacob as «the ascetic intellect».⁸³ Jacob also dedicated himself to spiritual exercises.⁸⁴ Laban, on the other hand, represents the passions. Philo calls him «the friend of the senses, who in his actions follows these rather than the intellect», and for this reason Jacob fled from Laban.⁸⁵ The scene in which Jacob buries the idols under the terebinth (oak) of Shechem (Gen 35) is interpreted as the consignment of the idols of the soul, all manner of wickedness and passion, to death and destruction.⁸⁶ «We practice the ascesis of virtue», says Philo.⁸⁷ Finally, the episode in which Jacob wrestles with the angel is interpreted as the struggle against the passions. The name «Jacob» means «supplanter», and it is typical of the supplanter, says Philo, «when he exerts himself in virtue, to dislodge, shake up and overthrow the foundations on which passion is grounded, even if these be somewhat solid and unmoving; and this does not usually come about without great effort and exertion, and only if one sustains to the very end the struggle for the attainment of wisdom, bravely undertaking the contests of the soul and throwing himself against the arguments which arise in opposition and grip him by the throat». In this contest Philo makes full use of athletic imagery by his description of the soul as athlete: the sacred combat, the prizes of victory, the crown of flowers.⁸⁸ The «crown» or reward is the name «Israel», by which is meant «one who sees God», one who is able to dedicate himself to the contemplative life. The taming of passions arises from the desire to attain to contemplation, because passions obstruct the vision of God.

The same interpretation of Jacob as athlete is found in numerous Christian writers influenced by Philo, Clement and Origen. It probably entered the monastic tradition via Origen's *Homilies on Genesis*, if not directly from Philo.⁸⁹ The letters of Antony repeatedly address readers as «race of Israel» and «sons

83 *Leg.* III, 19: ὁ νοῦς ὁ ἀσκητής.

84 *Leg.* III, 19. The exercises mentioned here by Philo include: readings, recitation, acts of worship, remembrance of good principles, self-control and discharge of duties. Another list can be found in *Her.* 253.

85 *Leg.* III, 19-20.

86 *Leg.* III, 20-26.

87 *Leg.* III, 22: ἀρετῆς ἐσμεν ἀσκηταί.

88 *Mut.* 81-82.

89 For a brief history of this interpretation, see P.-M. GUILLAUME, «Jacob. Le judaïsme. Les Pères de l'Église», in *Dictionnaire de la Spiritualité* 8, Paris 1974, 5-13.

of Israel» according to «your spiritual nature».⁹⁰ Undoubtedly this use of the name Israel refers to the contemplative life and is an allusion to its by then traditional interpretation as «the mind that sees God». The allusion presupposes that Antony's readership was familiar with this allegorical/etymological explanation. In his sixth letter, the reference to Gen 32:28-31 is explicit. Antony declares that if someone has come to know his true name (presumably «Israelite»), he will also know the name of truth. For this reason, he says, while Jacob wrestled with the angel, he retained the name Jacob, but when light dawned he received the name of Israel. «The meaning of this name is “a spirit which sees God”».⁹¹ Here the theme of contemplative self-knowledge follows that of the active athletic contest.

Further proofs of the influence of this tradition of interpretation on early Egyptian monasticism may be found in the Pachomian literature. The Coptic version of the *Life of Pachomius* says that Antony wrote a letter of condolence to the Pachomian monks after the death of Pachomius. In the letter he declares that they should have called Horsiesus (the new head of the community) not Horsiesus «but rather “the Israelite”, that is, the person who sees God with his interior eyes even if not with his outer eyes».⁹² Rubenson suggests that the most plausible explanation of the occurrence of «Israelite» and of its interpretation in the lives of Pachomius is directly due to one of Antony's letters.⁹³ Antony's letter may well in fact be the source; but we need to remember the central role played by reading and the interpretation of Scripture in early monasticism. The interpretation of the names of Jacob and Israel as figures in the battle against the passions aiming to attain the contemplative life was part of the monastic oral and catechetical tradition of interpretation. A passage of catechesis attributed to Pachomius supports this hypothesis; the listener (or reader) is exhorted to receive «the example of humility given by Jacob, his obedience, his perseverance,

90 Letters 3 (Georgian = Coptic 5 and Latin 5), 4,1; 5,1; 6,1. The Coptic text of the beginning of Letter 5 reads: *ΑΝΤΩΝΙΟC Ε4C2ΑΙ ΝΝΕ4ΜΕΡΑΤΕ ΝΩΗΡΕ ΝΙCΡΑΗΛΙΤΗC ΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ ΚΑΤΑΤΕΥΟΥCΙΑ ΝΝΟΕΡΑ*. See O. WINSTEDT, «The Original Text of one of St. Antony's Letters», *Journal of Theological Studies* 7 (1906) 545. For a comment on Antony's use of the term, see RUBENSON, *The Letters of St. Antony*, 69.

91 Letter 6,1. The presence of the «angel» in the interpretation suggests the influence of Origen who interpreted the «man» with whom Jacob struggled as an «angel». See *PArch* 3, 2, 5.

92 L.-TH. LEFORT, *S. Pachomii Vitae Sabidice Scriptae* (CSCO 99, 100; S.Coptici 9,10), Louvain 1965, 183.

93 RUBENSON, *The Letters of St. Antony*, 169.

until he became a light which sees the Father of the universe, and was named “Israel”». ⁹⁴

Thus the names of Jacob and Israel became a way of indicating the two stages of the spiritual life and serve as a symbolic description of the whole spiritual course undertaken by the monk. Later writers, such as John Cassian, were to draw an explicit parallel between the names of Jacob and Israel and the terminology of active and contemplative life. ⁹⁵

2.1.4 Reading: a spiritual exercise

This interpretation of the names of Jacob and Israel also illustrates another aspect, the central place which the Scriptures had in the life of the monk. Athanasius says that Antony learned the ascetic life from the Scriptures and affirms that among the practices which Antony wanted to learn from the advanced ascetics of his locality was reading or study. Athanasius uses a term to designate this activity that literally means «love of reading», but which had acquired a technical sense. ⁹⁶ Later on it was to be called *lectio divina* or spiritual reading. It meant the reading of a text in such a way as to uncover its «spiritual» meaning, or to derive from it spiritual nourishment. The ancient approach to the biblical text differed from the modern critical-historical method. The ancient way, common to Philo and to most of the Fathers of the Church, was based on the fundamental principle that all the sacred writings were addressed to readers and listeners in the context of their own time, as Paul too had emphasized (cf. Rom 4:24; 1 Cor 9:10). Where the modern exegete seeks first to establish the original meaning of the text (in the historical context in which it was produced), the exegete of antiquity sought above all the significance which the text could have for its readers and listeners of his own time. It was presupposed that all the Scriptures contained a spiritual sense, but that not all had a literal sense. ⁹⁷ *Lectio divina* or

94 L.-TH. LEFORT, *Oeuvres de S. Pachôme et de ses disciples* (CSCO 159), Louvain 1956, 1, 22. For a discussion of the authenticity of this text, see VEILLEUX, *Pachomian Koinonia* 1, 2. Although Crum and Lefort accepted it as a work of Pachomius, Veilleux prefers to see it as coming from the Pachomian milieu but not from Pachomius himself.

95 For a more developed exposition of this theme, see M. SHERIDAN, «Jacob and Israel. A Contribution to the History of an Interpretation», in this volume, 315-334.

96 See note 31 above.

97 This idea, explained with great clarity by Origen (*PArch* 4, 2, 5-9), was not however original with him. It is to be found already in Philo, Irenaeus, Hippolytus and in the philosophical interpretation of Homer. See ORIGÈNE, *Traité des principes IV* (Livres III et IV):

love of study, to use Athanasius' phrase,⁹⁸ meant reading Scripture with the aim of discovering the meaning relevant to the spiritual life on the ethical-moral plane. The interpretation of the names of Jacob and Israel is a good example of this kind of exegesis. Another instance is the figures of Martha and Mary as representative of the active and contemplative life. Already before Antony there existed an extensive corpus of this kind of exegesis, which was probably to a great extent transmitted by means of catechesis and preaching. Didymus of Alexandria, also a monk, whose meetings with Antony are well documented, became one of the most famous and prolific interpreters of the spiritual sense.⁹⁹ Thus reading and memorizing of the Scriptures were closely linked to a specific spiritual interpretation, which enabled these Scriptures to become also the vehicle for the handing on of a particular vision of the spiritual life.

Reading was, therefore, a central and indispensable aspect of a monk's spiritual training. It is already mentioned various times in Philo as part of asceticism.¹⁰⁰ But it was not enough merely to read the Scriptures. One had also to commit them to memory, and Athanasius mentions in particular that Antony knew all the Scriptures by heart.¹⁰¹ The knowledge of Scripture was also understood to be a practical and powerful weapon in spiritual combat. The aim was to arm oneself with short verses of Scripture suitable for any occasion, able to be made use of whenever there was need. The acquisition of this skill involved another spiritual exercise, *μελέτη*, often translated as «meditation», which in the context of ancient monasticism meant rather «to recite aloud».¹⁰² The recitation of Scripture was an essential practice which one could carry out whether working or walking. In this way it was possible to attain to the aim of continual prayer,

Commentaire et Fragments (SCh 269), ed. H. Crouzel - M. Simonetti, Paris 1980, 191-194. See also J. PÉPIN, *La Tradition de L'Allegorie de Philon d'Alexandrie a Dante. Études Historiques*, Paris 1987.

98 See note 31.

99 See above section 1.4 and note 44 and PALLADIUS, *Hist. Laus.* 4.3. The contacts between Antony and Didymus are well-documented in the tradition. Antony is even portrayed as giving examples of allegorical interpretation to Didymus. See RUBENSON, *The Letters of St. Antony*, 160.

100 *Her.* 253; *Leg.* III, 18. For reading as a spiritual exercise, see also HADOT, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*, 47-58.

101 *Vit. Ant.* 3,7.

102 See H. BACHT, *Das Vermächtnis des Ursprungs: Studien zum frühen Mönchtum I*, Würzburg 1972, Exkurs IV: «"Meditatio" in den ältesten Mönchsquellen», 244-264 and D. BURTON-CHRISTIE, *The Word and the Desert*, Oxford 1992, 122-129.

counseled by Paul (1 Thess 5:16), the aim of union with God in the contemplative life.

2.2 Paul of Tamma

The works of Paul of Tamma¹⁰³ represent a different, and independent, monastic situation. According to the editor of these writings, Tito Orlandi, they are to be dated in the first half of the fourth century, that is, contemporary with Antony and Pachomius. They would seem to represent a monastic tradition from middle Egypt, from monasteries in the region between Memphis and Shmun (Ashmunein), from which other figures known to us are Apollo, Phib, Anup, (p) Amoun and Aphu. According to the titles given by the editor, the works consist of an *Epistula*, a text entitled *De Cella* (according to the manuscript «the letter on the cell»), a work called *De Iudicio* (*diakrisis*), of which only the *subscriptio* remains, and short works on humility and poverty, as well as an *Opus sine titulo*. Among those whom Orlandi would associate with the Middle-Egyptian region, Paul is the only one whose works (apart from the accounts of their lives) have come down to us.¹⁰⁴ He is known to us also owing to accounts of his life in the *synaxarion* (list of saints). This man and his works are of notable interest precisely because, as in the case of Shenute, the Graeco-Latin tradition has preserved no mention of him. Even if the date of his works were to be set later in the fourth century, they would still be a precious testimony to what monks themselves thought with regard to their spiritual aims, the meaning of their manner of life and what they taught their disciples.

The literary genre of these works is that of monastic exhortation, similar to what we find in the letters of Antony, Ammonas, Pachomius, Theodore and Horsiesus. It is difficult to isolate a dominant argument in the topics dealt with in these works; neither do we find any systematic presentation of the spiritual life. Therefore we shall not attempt to present Paul's teaching in its entirety, but simply note those elements which are to be found also in other monastic traditions.

103 PAOLO DI TAMMA, *Opere*, ed. T. Orlandi, Roma 1988. The references to these works that follow are according to the titles and numbers given by Orlandi in this edition. An English translation has been made by T. VIVIAN, «Paul of Tamma: Four Works on Spirituality», *Coptic Church Review* 18 (1997) 105-116.

104 The works are preserved in fragments of manuscripts dating from the sixth century from the monastery of Apa Jeremias and from the ninth/tenth centuries from the White Monastery. This suggests rather wide diffusion. See PAOLO DI TAMMA, *Opere*, 3-10.

2.2.1 Terminology and ascetic practices

The fundamental attitude of attention to oneself (προσοχή) and of vigilance (νήψις) is well attested in these documents.¹⁰⁵ Paul admonishes his readers to be like a helmsman piloting his ship, scrutinizing the wind, noting its direction, whether it be favorable or not.¹⁰⁶ He uses the Greek word νήφειν (ΝΗΦΗ in Coptic) and the Coptic ΡΟΕΙC to exhort his disciples to vigilance¹⁰⁷ while they remain sitting in their cells. Related to this advice is that of guarding oneself (ἡρεῖν), the equivalent to the Greek φυλάσσειν, which was used also in the sense of keeping or observing the commandments, the covenant, etc.¹⁰⁸ Paul exhorts his readers not to relax their efforts and not to give their hearts rest as long as they remain in this world. His exhortation is perhaps to be understood as a negative formulation («do not fail to») of the admonition to «keep watch over yourselves».¹⁰⁹

Closely linked to this attitude of attention or vigilance is the question of the quality and the nature of thoughts. Paul urges the monk not to allow his thoughts to remain idle: «Let them be dead while you live with God».¹¹⁰ He also employs the Greek word λογισμός (in Coptic: ΛΟΓΙCΜΟC) to refer to delusive, deceptive or vain thoughts, against which one should defend oneself. He

105 The word itself (ΠΡΟCΕΧΕ) is found only once in a quotation by Paul (1 Tim 4, 13; *De humilitate* 14) but we are using it to indicate the attitude/activity/exercise already described above. For this vocabulary in other monastic literature, see P. MIQUEL, *Lexique du desert: Etude de quelques mots-clés du vocabulaire monastique grec ancien*, Bégrolles-en-Mauges 1986, 191-198 and R. VERNAY, «Attention», in *Dictionnaire de la Spiritualité* 1, Paris 1937, 1058-1077.

106 *Opus sine titulo* 100. The same image of the steersman is found in Athanasius' *Letter to Virgins*: ATHANASE, «Lettre aux vierges», in ATHANASE: *Lettres festales et pastorales en copte*, ed. L.-Th. Lefort (CSCO 150) Louvain 1955, 90.

107 *Opus sine titulo*, 109, 110

108 *De Cella* 62, *De humilitate* 21 quoting Prov 4,23: 2EN 2APE2 NIM EKE2APE2 ETE-K2HT.

109 *De Cella* 6, 8. Orlandi translates the phrase ΜΠΡΚΑΠΕΚ2HT ΕΒΟΛ as «non scoraggiarti» (do not become discouraged). However, in the light of the monastic concern for προσοχή, it seems better to take it as the negative equivalent. See W. E. CRUM, *A Coptic Dictionary*, Oxford 1939, 715b for this meaning. The phrase occurs also in the catechesis attributed to Pachomius in a context that requires this meaning even more clearly: ΜΝΝCΑΝΑΙ ΟΝ †2ΩΝ ΕΤΟΟΤΚ ΕΤΜΚΑΠΕΚ2HT ΕΒΟΛ. See L.-Th. LEFORT, *Oeuvres de S. Pachôme et de ses disciples* (CSCO 159), Louvain 1956, 22.

110 *Epistula* 3.

makes explicit mention of vainglory.¹¹¹ Without doubt the favorable or unfavorable winds mentioned above are to be understood as thoughts or passions. Paul says to his readers: «If you dispel all evil thoughts from your heart, your whole body will feel light and your thoughts will remain on the summit of virtue».¹¹²

The combat against thoughts is also described according to the traditional imagery of the athletic contest, the aim of which is purity of heart. Paul says: «Sitting in your cell apply yourself diligently to prayer and fasting and the contest (αΓΩΝ) within your own heart, and you will abide in purity of heart».¹¹³ The word αΓΩΝ is undoubtedly a reference to the pastoral epistles;¹¹⁴ it was to become the technical term in monastic literature to designate the practical or active life, which has as its aim purity of heart. This aim is also described as freedom from the passions (παθος), a concept which Paul uses in a different context where he states that «poverty and need are what diminish passion, and tranquillity with regard to these things is what heals a man».¹¹⁵ The phrase that is here translated as «tranquillity with regard to these things» (ΜΝΤΑΤΡΟΟΥΩ) is almost certainly the equivalent to the Greek ἀμεριμνία, another technical term in Greek ascetic vocabulary which means «without anxiety».¹¹⁶

Paul of Tamma counsels his disciples also to seek inner peace or tranquillity: «walk in poverty and in a life which is light and without preoccupation (ΜΝΤΑΤΡΟΟΥΩ) and in need, that you may have tranquillity».¹¹⁷ The Coptic term which is used here (ΕΚΜΟΤΕΝ) is equivalent to the Greek ἀνάπαυσις, which is found in Matt 11:29. Elsewhere Paul cites Matt 11:28 «Come to me and I shall give you rest».¹¹⁸ There also appears in these writing the Coptic equivalent of the other Greek term that signifies inner peace (ἡσυχία). Paul tells his readers that the demons fight openly against someone who lives in the desert. They are merciless against one who sits alone in quietness (ΖΝΟΥΥΟΡΕΖΤ).¹¹⁹ He encour-

111 *De Cella* 100.

112 *De humilitate* 22.

113 *Opus sine titulo* 117. The word αΓΩΝ is found also in *De Cella* 35.

114 Cf. 1 Tim 4:10; 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7.

115 *De paupertate* 3.

116 See MIQUEL, *Lexique du desert*, p. 49-65 for other references. The word is found in 1 Cor 7:32 where Paul is urging his readers to remain celibate so that they may be without cares (ἀμεριμνους). The Coptic (Sahidic) translation gives: ΑΤΡΟΟΥΣ.

117 *De Paupertate* 2.

118 *Opus sine titulo* 215. †ΝΑ† ΕΥΜΤΟΝ ΝΗΤΝ = ἀναπαύσω ὑμᾶς.

119 *De Cella* 61.

ages his disciples not to allow their thoughts to multiply, so that they may remain quiet (ΕΚΚΘΑΖΤ) and free from confusion.¹²⁰

These writings are full of scriptural allusions and quotations. Therefore it is not surprising that Paul should recommend the practice of «meditation», that is, the recitation of Scripture and reading. In support of the practice of meditation he quotes Ps 38:4 «The fire will blaze in my meditation (ΤΑΜΕΛΕΤΑ)» and Ps 118:92 «If your law had not been for me my meditation, I should have perished in my nothingness».¹²¹ As an exhortation to the practice of reading, he quotes 1 Tim 4:13 «Persevere in reading, until I come».

2.2.2 Interpretation of Scripture

Paul of Tamma's eclectic citation of Scripture presupposes a wide and precise knowledge of the biblical text on the part of his hearers, apart from knowledge of the spiritual interpretation of these texts. For example, in the letter on the cell of the monk, he states that the poor man who is also humble will be called «“Josedeck” among the prophets». The quotation comes from Jeremiah 23, where the name Josedeck is the last word of verse 6, and the expression «among the prophets» coincides with the first words of verse 9. Verses 7-8 of the Hebrew text are missing from the Septuagint. The quotation, however, would be devoid of meaning if one did not know that the name «Josedeck» had already been interpreted to mean «justice» (δικαιοσύνη) or «the righteous of God» (οἱ τοῦ θεοῦ δίκαιοι). The quotation and its interpretation are found in Eusebius and Didymus of Alexandria.¹²² Obviously there must have been some contact with the exegetical tradition of Alexandria.

Another example occurs in the brief work called «The letter of Apa Paul», where the author declares that now is the time to stand firm under temptation, seeing that, according to *James* 1:12 «the perfect and the blessed will receive

120 *De paupertate* 4. For the equivalence with the Greek ἡσυχία, see W. CRUM, *A Coptic Dictionary*, Oxford 1939, 389b.

121 *De humilitate* 12-14. For the meaning of ΜΕΛΕΤΑ as recitation, see note 102.

122 See EUSEBIUS, *Dem. evang.*, 7,3,49, in *Eusebius Werke* 6, ed. I.A. Heikel (GCS 23), Leipzig 1913, 349: «καὶ τοῦτο τὸ ὄνομα ὃ καλέσει αὐτοὺς κύριος, Ἰωσεδεκεῖμ ἐν τοῖς προφήταις». μεταλαμβάνεται δέ, ὡς ἔφην, τοῦνομα εἰς τὴν Ἑλλήνων φωνὴν «οἱ τοῦ θεοῦ δίκαιοι», and L. DOUTRELEAU, *Didyme l'Aveugle sur Zacharie* (Sch 84), Paris 1962, 440 §27: Οἱ γενάμενοι πολλοὶ στέφανοι ἐκ τῶν νοητῶν χρυσοῦ καὶ ἀργύρου ἐπιτίθενται τῇ Ἰησοῦ κεφαλῇ, τοῦ τῆς δικαιοσύνης, — τὸ γὰρ Ἰωσεδέκ εἰς τὸ «δικαιοσύνη» μεταλαμβάνεται ἐκ τῆς ἑβραϊκῆς εἰς τὴν ἐλλάδα φωνήν.

the crown of life». Then he adds «because you have labored for this, my son, you have become the beloved of the unicorn». The allusion is to Ps 28:6. The meaning remains obscure. Access to one possible interpretation may be regained from Eusebius' commentary on this Psalm, where the «beloved» is understood to be Jerusalem.¹²³ As is well known, Jerusalem was commonly interpreted as a symbol of the human soul, and, as such, the dwelling place of God. The meaning of another fairly obscure text seems to bear some comparison to the one just put forward. In this Paul exhorts the reader not to follow his desires and then quotes *Joel 3:17* «the Jerusalem above will be for you a holy city... and Egypt will be in ruins», that is to say, explains Paul, «your enemies, and that the Lord will dwell in Sion». ¹²⁴ The meaning seems to be this: the Lord will dwell in the soul from which the desires have been cast out. Egypt was traditionally interpreted as the human body insofar as it was the seat of the passions.¹²⁵ That this was the meaning of the passage we have just considered is confirmed by another text in which Paul says «Do not let your body live in your cell while your mind is in Egypt. But make of your body a temple of God and control your thought and you will attain to stability of mind». ¹²⁶

Paul of Tamma describes the monk or the anchorite (the terms are used synonymously)¹²⁷ sitting in his cell as «the incense of God» and «the altar of God» (θυσιαστήριον):¹²⁸ allegorical interpretations of «incense» and «altar» are already to be found in Philo and Origen.¹²⁹ In similar mode, he states that «the true and perfect tent is a wise man who stays in his cell»; and he adds the quotation «in which is the golden vase; and here is the manna, the rod of

123 EUSEBIUS, *Comm. Ps.* (PG 23, 256): καὶ λεπυνεῖ αὐτὰς ὡς τὸν μόσχον τοῦ Λιβάνου καὶ ὁ ἡγαπημένος ὡς υἱὸς μονοκερώτων. Ἡ καὶ οὕτως· Μόσχον ἔοικε Λιβάνου, τὸν υἱὸν μονοκερώτων, τὴν Ἱερουσαλὴμ λέγειν, καὶ τὸν πάλαι ἡγαπημένον υἱὸν μονοκερώτων.

124 *De humilitate* 24.

125 The interpretation of Egypt as signifying the body or the passions of the body goes back at least to Philo of Alexandria. See *Congr.* 20. It is found also in Origen, *HomGn* 15,4.

126 *Opus sine titulo* 111-112.

127 *De Cella* 36-37.

128 *De Cella* 52-53.

129 See PHILO, *Spec* 1,287,3: τὰ μὲν ῥητὰ ταῦτα [σύμβολα νοητῶν], τὰ δὲ πρὸς διάνοιαν τοῖς τῆς ἀλληγορίας κανόνσιν ἐπισκεπτέον· πρὸς ἀλήθειαν τοῦ θεοῦ θυσιαστήριον ἔστιν ἡ εὐχάριστος τοῦ σοφοῦ ψυχὴ παραγέισα ἐκ τελείων ἀρετῶν ἀτμήτων καὶ ἀδιατρέτων· and ORIGEN, *CCels* 8,17: οὐχ ὁρῶν ὅτι βωμοὶ μὲν εἰσιν ἡμῖν τὸ ἐκάστου τῶν δικαίων ἡγεμονικόν, ἀφ' οὗ ἀναπέμπεται ἀληθῶς καὶ νοητῶς εὐώδη «θυμιάματα», «προσευχαί» ἀπὸ συνειδήσεως καθαρᾶς.

Aaron which burst into bud, and the tablets of the covenant» (Heb 9:4).¹³⁰ All this becomes a good deal less obscure when we compare it with the allegorical interpretation already given by Origen, according to which the golden vase containing the manna represents the treasure of the word of God and the tablets of the covenant signify the word of God inscribed on the heart: this reading is itself based on the interpretation given by the apostle Paul in 2 Cor 3:3 and Rom 2:15.¹³¹ It seems that Paul of Tamma accepted the Origenist hermeneutical principle of interpreting the Scriptures by the Scriptures.

A more complicated exegetical tradition possibly lies behind the obscure admonition to «guard yourself on the right».¹³² A similar idea is found in a catechetical text attributed to Pachomius, where the author says «The demons usually approach you from your right, whereas they appear to everybody else on the left».¹³³ In order to understand what is being said here it is necessary to be familiar with a certain homily by Origen (or at least with the exegetical tradition deriving from it) on Ps 15, where it is said that the righteous man has no left side. In order to support this, Origen quotes other scriptural passages, including Ex 17:12, where «it is not written (of Moses) that Aaron stood on his right and Ur on his left, but that he had Aaron on one side and Ur on the other». The case of the judge Aoth (Judges 3:15) is quoted also because «he was called *amphoterodexios*, that is, endowed with two right hands».¹³⁴ The more immediate context of Paul of Tamma's text, however, is probably Zech 3:1 where it is said of the Lord that «the devil stands at his right to make war on him». Didymus of Alexandria offers an explanation in his commentary on Zechariah: the devil stands on the right with the hostile intention of taking possession of those who are called to have faith and the other virtues.¹³⁵

A more searching reading of these texts would no doubt reveal a great many points of contact with earlier exegetical tradition, and more specifically with

130 *De Cella* 67-68.

131 See ORIGEN, *HomNum* X,3. A similar interpretation may be found in CASSIAN, *Conl.* 14.X.2-3.

132 *De Cella* 62.

133 Catechesis 56. The Coptic text and a French translation may be found in L.-TH. LEFORT, *Oeuvres de S. Pachôme et de ses disciples* (CSCO 159, 160), Louvain 1956. See A. VEILLEUX, *Pachomian Koinonia* 3, Kalamazoo, Mich. 1982, 2 for a discussion of the attribution to Pachomius and an English translation, p. 39.

134 See ORIGENE - GIROLAMO, *74 Omelie sul libro dei Salmi*, ed. G. Coppa, Milano 1993, 598-600.

135 See L. DOUTRELEAU, *Didyme l'Aveugle sur Zacharie* (Sch 83), Paris 1962, 292-293.

the Alexandrian tradition of Philo, Origen, Eusebius, Didymus and Athanasius. The writings of Paul of Tamma represent a type of monasticism not far different from what is portrayed in the letters of Antony or even in the *Vita Antonii*. The monastic culture of Paul of Tamma is centered on reading the Scriptures, learning them by heart, reciting them and interpreting them. The aim of reading and of the interpretation of the Scriptures was for him, as Origen had explained clearly, in an argument grounded on Pauline imagery, to find food for the soul and for the growth of life.¹³⁶

For Paul of Tamma the cell is the place par excellence where the interior life can develop, and for him this is clearly the heart of the monastic life. The cell is, according to his own maxims the «judge and educator of the monk» and «the wealth of the anchorite».¹³⁷

2.3 THE PACHOMIAN MONASTIC CULTURE

2.3.1 *Ascetic terminology and spiritual combat*

There exists an ample bibliography on the cenobitic ideology¹³⁸ which characterized Pachomian monasticism, but not sufficient attention has been given to the role of personal asceticism and its relevant terminology, and to scriptural interpretations proper to this literature. There has even been the suggestion that asceticism is characteristic of the anchoritic life, while obedience and mutual

136 The notion of the Scriptures as providing spiritual food is based above all on the Pauline usage of the metaphor: 1 Cor 3:2-3; 10:1-4. Heb 5:12-14 could also be used to support the idea of the spiritual or allegorical sense of the Scriptures as spiritual nourishment. But the banquet of wisdom described in Prov 9:2-6 is also important. See ORIGEN, *HomGen* 7,4; 16,3-4; *HomLev* 4,6; 4,10; 5,7. The desire to obtain spiritual food could also be a strong motivation for achieving literacy.

137 *De Cella* 36, 37.

138 See for example the Bohairic Life where the following teaching comparing the anchoritic life unfavorably with the cenobitic is attributed to Pachomius: «I will show you as well that the honor and the glory of the men of the Koinonia, who have a good way of life together with the excellence of the toils they impose on themselves, are superior to those of the men who lead the anchoritic life». (VEILLEUX, *Pachomian Koinonia 1*, The Bohairic Life of Pachomius §105, 147-148). A similar unfavorable comparison is found in §116. In §126-127 the great Antony is made to explain why the cenobitic life is preferable. It is difficult to know to what extent this ideology goes back to Pachomius himself. That such comparisons of different types of monastic life were in circulation by the third quarter of the fourth century is clear from Jerome's Letter 22. See VOGÜÉ, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique 1*, 288ff. for an analysis of the text.

love are the distinctive features of Pachomian monasticism.¹³⁹ In reality, the fundamental notions of attention to oneself, watchfulness and the need to persevere in the spiritual combat are present even in the earliest strata of the Pachomian corpus. The letters of Pachomius seem to be above all else exhortations to personal asceticism.¹⁴⁰ The admonition to be attentive to oneself (πρόσεχε σεαυτῷ) occurs in his second letter, even if the context is obscure because of its use of the symbolic significance of the Greek characters. The same exhortation appears more clearly in the third letter: «It has been written to us to be attentive to them ourselves (προσέχειν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἡμεῖς), in order to understand all the parables, to have knowledge, and not ourselves to become thieves also, but to walk instead in the way of the just of the early times who were pleasing to God».¹⁴¹ Likewise, the terminology of vigilance and combat is also well attested in these letters: «We should not be afraid of death in our place of pilgrimage, but rather engage in the struggle, that we may have peace together with those who keep the judgments of God. For what advantage would it be to you to gain the whole world if you remain an enemy of God? (cf. Matt 16:26; Mark 8:36; Luke 9:25) It is well that we should understand what has often been told us, knowing that the world, and its desires, are passing away (1 John 2:17). Stay awake and keep watch over your conduct (cf. Eph 5:15)» [Letter 4].¹⁴² Further on in the same letter we read «Therefore we need to keep vigil, and with every care make preparations for the feasting to come, that we may not be cast into confusion when we come to the times of rest and be not found subject to slavery, but be as new dough (cf. 1 Cor 5:7), knowing that the beauty of the fields has been given to us (cf. Ps 49:11)».

139 C. JOEST, «Proverbia 6,3 und die Bruderliebe bei den Pachomianern», *Vigiliae christianae* 47 (1993) 119-150.

140 On the question of the authenticity of the letters, see H. QUECKE, *Die Briefe Pachoms, Griechischer Text der Handschrift W.145 der Chester Beatty Library* (Textus Patristici et Liturgici 11), Regensburg 1975, 11-17.

141 For the Greek text, see QUECKE, *Die Briefe*, 100, 104. The Coptic text of these passages has not been preserved. The English translation is from VEILLEUX, *Pachomian Koinonia* 3, 56.

142 For the fourth and fifth letters neither the Coptic nor the Greek text has survived. The translation is from the Latin of Jerome: *Non est timendus interitus in loco peregrinationis nostrae; sed pugnandum quomodo pacem cum his qui Dei iustificationes custodiunt habere possimus. H. Si lucreris omnem mundum et habeas contra Deum inimicitias, quae est utilitas? Decet igitur ut quae dicuntur nobis aliquando intellegamus, scientes quod mundus praetereat et concupiscentia eius. Vigilate et uidete quomodo ambuletis*. The Latin text may be found in A. BOON, *Pachomiana Latina* (Bibliothèque de la Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique 7), Louvain 1932, 87.

A further exhortation is to be found in the same letter: «Struggle and fight alongside the brethren who live with you. I have written to you in figures and parables, that you might search out their meaning with knowledge, following in the footsteps of the saints and, schooled by the words of God, you might escape his judgement». Similarly in the fifth letter we find, «I desire that you should be like those who knew no difference between left and right (Jonah 4:11).¹⁴³ Stay awake, defend your fortresses, because your enemies have drawn their bow, a bitter thing (Ps 63:4)». ¹⁴⁴

There are many examples of this asceticism of the mind also in the writings of Pachomius' disciples. In the catechetical treatise attributed to Pachomius,¹⁴⁵ the combat against one's thoughts and the exhortation to vigilance have a prominent place:

10. My son, I ask you to be watchful and to be on your guard (1 Pet 4:7; 5:8),¹⁴⁶ acquainted with those who lie in ambush against you. The spirit of cowardice and the spirit of distrust walk hand in hand; the spirit of lying and the spirit of deceit walk hand in hand; the spirits of greed and trafficking, of perjury and dishonesty, and that of jealousy walk hand in hand; the spirit of vanity and the spirit of gluttony walk hand in hand; the spirit of fornication and the spirit of impurity walk hand in hand; the spirit of enmity and the spirit of sadness walk hand in hand. Woe to the wretched soul in which they make their home and of which they make themselves masters. They hold such a soul far away from God, because it is in their power. It sways from side to side till it ends in the abyss of hell.¹⁴⁷

The author exhorts his reader (or hearer) to «watch over¹⁴⁸ your body and your heart with every solicitude» (Section 36). Later on he urges «And again

143 The reference is to the inhabitants of Nineveh who repented on hearing the preaching of Jonah.

144 *Vigilate et tendite arcus uestros: tetenderunt enim aduersarii arcum rem amaram*. BOON, *Pachomiana Latina*, 90.

145 LEFORT, *Oeuvres de S. Pachôme et de ses disciples* (CSCO 159), Louvain 1956, 1, 22. For a discussion of the authenticity of this text, see note 95.

146 $\text{†}\text{Z}\text{W}\text{N}\ \text{E}\text{T}\text{O}\text{O}\text{T}\text{K}\ \text{E}\text{P}\text{O}\text{E}\text{I}\text{C}\ \text{N}\text{̄}\text{N}\text{H}\text{F}\text{H}$: 1 Pet 4:7: $\text{Θ}\text{A}\text{H}\ \text{Δ}\text{E}\ \text{N}\text{O}\text{Y}\text{O}\text{N}\ \text{N}\text{I}\text{M}\ \text{A}\text{C}\text{Z}\text{W}\text{N}\ \text{E}\text{Z}\text{O}\text{Y}\text{N}\cdot\ \text{O}\text{M}\text{P}\text{E}\text{T}\text{N}\text{Z}\text{HT}\ \text{S}\text{E}\ \text{N}\text{̄}\text{T}\text{E}\text{T}\text{N}\text{N}\text{H}\text{F}\text{E}\ \text{E}\text{N}\text{E}\text{W}\text{A}\text{H}\text{A}$. 1 Pet 5:8: $\text{N}\text{H}\text{F}\text{E}\ \text{N}\text{̄}\text{T}\text{E}\text{T}\text{N}\text{̄}\text{P}\text{O}\text{E}\text{I}\text{C}\cdot\ \text{X}\text{E}\ \text{P}\text{E}\text{T}\text{N}\text{̄}\text{A}\text{N}\text{T}\text{I}\text{Δ}\text{I}\text{K}\text{O}\text{C}\ \text{P}\text{A}\text{I}\text{Δ}\text{B}\text{O}\text{Λ}\text{O}\text{C}\ \text{M}\text{O}\text{O}\text{W}\text{E}\ \text{E}\text{C}\text{E}\text{Λ}\text{Z}\text{H}\text{M}\cdot$

147 The English translation is from VEILLEUX, *Pachomian Koinonia* 3, 15.

148 LEFORT, *Oeuvres de S. Pachôme et de ses disciples*, 14: $\text{Z}\text{N}\text{Z}\text{A}\text{P}\text{E}\text{Z}\ \text{N}\text{I}\text{M}\ \text{Z}\text{A}\text{P}\text{E}\text{Z}\ \text{E}\text{P}\text{E}\text{K}\text{C}\text{W}\text{M}\text{A}\ \text{M}\text{N}\text{̄}\text{P}\text{E}\text{K}\text{H}\text{Z}\text{T}$. This section is found also in a homily attributed to Athanasius. Cf. L.-TH. LEFORT, «S. Athanase écrivain copte», *Le Muséon* 46 (1933) 1-33.

I pray you, give your heart no respite!»¹⁴⁹ Clearly the spiritual combat was of central importance for him: «Now the struggle lies before you»¹⁵⁰ (cf. Heb 12:1-2). Examine what befalls you each day (cf. 1 Thess 5:21) that you may know whether you are among those who are for us or those who fight against us. The demons will approach you on your right;¹⁵¹ to everybody else they appear on the left».

A similar interest in interior vigilance and the spiritual combat is found in the third catechetical treatise by Theodore, disciple and successor of Pachomius as head of the monastic congregation: «For that reason, let us be watchful and let us guard the grace fallen to our lot far beyond the deserts of our works».¹⁵² And further on he urges «Let us chasten the wicked thoughts of our hearts, even keeping silence and having before our mind's eye the struggle of those who have finished their battle with distinction».¹⁵³

In the Lives, Pachomius exemplifies one who had fought above all against every kind of evil thought. It is said that once, when he had been irritable towards his brother and had provoked him to anger, Pachomius repented and asked the Lord to take away «this carnal thought», that is, anger:

And he said, «Alas for me, for the mind of the flesh is in me. I am going to die; indeed, as it is written, "The carnal thought is death" (Rom 8:6). Whether I am put to the test unjustly or for good reason, have mercy on me, Lord, lest I be lost. If the enemy finds, little by little, a place for himself within me, he will overcome me in the end; for, "If a man keeps the whole of the law but fails in one single point, he is responsible for it all" (Jas 2:10). I believe that if your abundant grace helps me, I will learn how to walk in the way of the saints, "stretching out toward what lies ahead" (Phil 3:15); for they indeed have put the enemy to shame, with

149 LEFORT, *Oeuvres de S. Pachôme et de ses disciples*, 22: ΜΝ̄ΝCΑΝΑΙ ΟΝ †ΖΩΝ ΕΤΟΟΤΚ ΕΤ̄ΜΚΑΠΕΚΖΗΤ ΕΒΟΛ.

150 LEFORT, *Oeuvres de S. Pachôme et de ses disciples* (CSCO 159), 22: ΤΕΝΟΥΘΕ ΕΙCΠΑΓΩΝ ΚΗ ΝΑΚ ΕΖΡΑΙ· ΔΟΚΗΜΑΖΕ Ν̄ΝΕΤΝΗΥ ΕΧΩΚ Μ̄ΜΗΗΝΕ. Heb 12,1-2: ΕΤΒΕ-ΠΑῙ ΘΕ ΕῩΝΤΑΝ ΖΩΩΝ Μ̄ΜΑΥ Μ̄ΠΕΕΙΜΗΗΘΕ Μ̄Μ̄ΝΤΡΕ ΕΤΚΗ ΝΑΝ ΕΖΡΑΙ· ΕΑΝΚΩ Ν̄CΩΝ Μ̄Μ̄ΝΤΧΑCΙΖΗΤ ΝΙΜ· ΑΥΩ ΠΝΟΒΕ ΕΤΑΖΕΡΑΤ̄ ΕΡΟΝ· ΜΑΡ̄ΝΠΩΤ ΖΙΤ̄ΝΟΥΖΥΠΟΜΟΝΗ Μ̄ΠΑΓΩΝ ΕΤΚΗ ΝΑΝ ΕΖΡΑΙ· 12,2: ΕΝΩΩΩΤ̄ ΕΠΑΡΧΗΓΟC Ν̄ΤΠΙCΤΙC· Μ̄Ν̄ΠΡΕCΧΩΚ ΕΒΟΛ ΙC· 1 Thes 5:21: ΔΟΚΙΜΑΖΕ ΔΕ Ν̄ΖΩΒ ΝΙΜ· ΑΜΑΖΤΕ Μ̄ΠΠΕΤΝΑΝΟΥC·

151 Ζ̄Μ̄ΠΟΥΝΑΜ. The explanation for this idea is to be found in a homily of Origen. The same idea is found in the works of Paul of Tamma. See above section 2.2.2.

152 VEILLEUX, *Pachomian Koinonia* 3, 94, §4..

153 VEILLEUX, *Pachomian Koinonia* 3, 111, §30.

your help. How indeed will I teach those you will call to this life with me, if I do not begin by overcoming carnal thoughts?»¹⁵⁴

In the same text it becomes evident that already while he was living the anchoritic life with Palamon, Pachomius dedicated himself not only to the exterior practices of prayer and asceticism, but above all to keeping watch over his heart against evil thoughts. «His great concern was to purify his heart in order to see God and to be worthy of him in the age to come. He carefully observed the command given also by Solomon: “Watch over your heart” » (Prov 4:23).¹⁵⁵

A similar teaching is found in the Bohairic life where Theodore asks Pachomius to foretell to him whether he would or would not see God. Pachomius answered: «Make haste to bring forth the fruit the Gospel speaks of, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matt 5:8). And if an impure thought enters your mind, be it hatred or wickedness, jealousy, envy, contempt for your brother, or human vainglory, remember at once and say, “If I consent to any one of those things, I shall not see the Lord” ».¹⁵⁶

2.3.2 *The role of and the interpretation of Scripture*¹⁵⁷

According to the Bohairic life, Pachomius «established three instructions a week: one on Saturday and two on the holy Sunday, while the housemasters gave some, if they wished, on the two fast days».¹⁵⁸ Fast days then were Wednesdays and Fridays. The custom of the superior of the monastery giving catechesis apart from the heads of individual houses may be verified by the evidence given by the rules. In the *Praecepta*, 20, the three sessions of catechesis given by the superior are spoken of, while *Praecepta* 115 clearly has to do with those held twice a week by the heads of houses, as is the case also in *Inst.* 15. The catechesis given by the

154 Indicated with the siglum S³ by Lefort. English translation: VEILLEUX, *Pachomian Koinonia* 1, 42-43, §19. The Coptic text is found in L.-TH. LEFORT, *S. Pachomii Vitae Sahidice Scriptae* (CSCO 99, 100; S.Coptici 9,10), Louvain 1965, 109.

155 LEFORT, *S. Pachomii Vitae Sahidice Scriptae*, 111.

156 VEILLEUX, *Pachomian Koinonia* 1, 58, §33; Coptic text: L.-TH. LEFORT, *S. Pachomii Vita Bohairice Scripta* (CSCO 89, S.Coptici 7), Louvain, 1965, 36.

157 See especially A. VEILLEUX, *La Liturgie dans le cénobitisme Pachômien au quatrième siècle* (SA 57), Roma 1968, 262-275: «L'Écriture Sainte dans la Koinonia pachômienne» and H. BACHT, *Das Vermächtnis des Ursprungs: Studien zum frühen Mönchtum* 1, Würzburg 1972, 191-212: «Die Rolle der heiligen Schrift bei Horsiesius».

158 A. VEILLEUX, *Pachomian Koinonia* 1, 49, §26; Coptic text: LEFORT, *S. Pachomii Vita Bohairice Scripta* (CSCO 89), 26.

superiors of monasteries took place on Saturdays and Sundays.¹⁵⁹ According to the Bohairic life the content of this catechesis was the sacred Scriptures.¹⁶⁰ Other regulations prescribe that the monks are to repeat and discuss among themselves these instructions when they are seated in their houses.¹⁶¹ There is also evidence of less formal, daily discussions with the elders concerning Scripture.¹⁶²

An indication of the content of this scriptural catechesis may be deduced from Theodore's second letter, in which, after having quoted several passages from Scripture, he adds, «Let us reflect on this and scrutinize it three times» (cf. Prov 22:20).¹⁶³ This quotation is particularly significant because of its use by Origen. For him, in fact, it meant a whole exegetical program in which it was necessary to interpret the Scriptures first, if possible, at the literal level, and then on the two spiritual levels.¹⁶⁴ That this is a correct understanding of the passage from Theodore is confirmed by other passages, from the Sahidic lives. In one of these Theodore is sitting alone reading the book of the twelve prophets, when there appears to him an angel, from whom he requests the interpretation of a

159 VEILLEUX, *La Liturgie*, 271-273.

160 VEILLEUX, *La Liturgie*, 274.

161 *Praecepta* 122, 138. The Latin text may be found in BOON, *Pachomiana Latina*, 46, 49.

162 Cf. VEILLEUX, *La Liturgie*, 273.

163 For the Coptic text, see H. QUECKE, «Ein Brief von einem Nachfolger Pachoms», *Orientalia* 44 (1975) 426-433. English translation: VEILLEUX, *Pachomian Koinonia* 3, p. 128, §2. See also A. DE VOGÜÉ, «Les nouvelles lettres d'Horsière et de Théodore. Analyse et commentare», *Studia Monastica* 28 (1986) 7-50.

164 See ORIGEN, *PArch* 4, 2, 4: «... we think that the way that seems to us right for understanding the Scriptures and seeking their meaning is such that we are taught what sort of understanding we should have of it by no less than Scripture itself. We have found in Proverbs some such instruction for the examination of divine Scripture given by Solomon. He says, "For your part describe them to yourself threefold in admonition and knowledge, that you may answer words of truth to those who question you" (Prov 22:20-21 LXX). Therefore a person ought to describe threefold in his soul the meaning of divine letters, that is, so that the simple may be edified by, so to speak, the body of the Scriptures; for that is what we call the ordinary and narrative meaning. But if any have begun to make some progress and can contemplate something more fully, they should be edified by the soul of Scripture. And those who are perfect are like those concerning whom the Apostle says, "Yet among the perfect we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this world or of the rulers of this world, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification" (1 Cor 2:6-7). Such people should be edified by that spiritual Law (cf. Rom 7:14) which has a shadow of the good things to come (cf. Heb 10:1), edified as by the spirit of Scripture. Thus, just as a human being is said to be made up of body, soul, and spirit, so also is sacred Scripture, which has been granted by God's gracious dispensation for man's salvation». Eng. tr.: R.A. GREER, *Origen* (The Classics of Western Spirituality), New York 1979, 182.

certain passage. That same day Theodore explains to the brethren what he had learned from the angel's explanation, that is, that it is necessary to take care to present the literal meaning of the text before giving the spiritual interpretation, with the exception of those texts which in their literal sense would not edify the hearer. This is particularly interesting because it is very similar, if not identical, to the much-discussed teaching of Origen concerning the «absence of meaning» (*defectus litterae*) at the literal level.¹⁶⁵ It would be going beyond the evidence to conclude that Theodore knew the *De Principiis* of Origen himself, but one may infer that the teaching given concerning the correct method for interpreting the Scriptures elaborated in this work enjoyed wide dissemination.¹⁶⁶

A similar passage is found in another Sahidic life in which it is stated that, after having understood the literal sense of the words written in the Scriptures, we should reflect on their spiritual significance according to the teaching of Paul who declares that «the law is spiritual» (Rom 7:14)¹⁶⁷ The author then offers examples of such spiritual exegesis, taken from Paul's writings: the spiritual interpretation given to the law of circumcision (Gen 17:14) which occurs in Phil 3:14, and the interpretation given to Deut 24:5 in 1 Cor 9:10: «You shall not muzzle an ox while he treads the threshing floor». These examples are significant also because Origen had cited Paul as the pre-eminent example and model to follow concerning the practice of allegorical interpretation.¹⁶⁸

Examples of such allegorical interpretation occur also in a catechetical treatise by Horsiesus where a spiritual interpretation is offered of the verse «My son, honor God with your sincere efforts, offer him the first fruits of your righteous-

165 The text was designated as S⁵ by LEFORT, *S. Pachomii Vitae Sahidice Scriptae* (CSCO 99), 197. For the French translation see: L. TH. LEFORT, *Les vies coptes de saint Pachôme et de ses premiers successeurs* (BMus 16), Louvain 1943, 287. For the principle of *defectus litterae*, see note 97.

166 As has already been noted, the later polemical passages found in the Pachomian literature with regard to Origen cannot be taken as reliable indications of the situation in the fourth century. The hostile attitude toward allegorical exegesis found in the writings of Shenoute does not necessarily reflect a universal opinion on the part of Coptic writers. See T. ORLANDI, *Shenute contra Origenistas: Testo con introduzione e traduzione*, Roma 1985, no. 331-333, 359-363. Shenoute does reflect, however, the attitude of Epiphanius among others. The homilies of Rufus of Shotep at the end of the next century (6th) are clear evidence that the tradition of Alexandrian exegesis was alive and well-known among educated monastic circles. See note 39 above.

167 Designated as S³ by Lefort. Cf. LEFORT, *Les vies coptes de saint Pachôme*, 356. The Coptic text is found in L.-TH. LEFORT, «Glanures Pachômiennes», *Le Muséon* 54 (1941) 124.

168 See F. COCCHINI, *Il Paolo di Origene* (Verba Seniorum N.S. 11), Roma 1992, 117-148.

ness, that your granaries may be full of grain and your vats filled with wine» (Prov 3:9-10). According to Horsiesus: «No doubt he speaks of the granaries and vats of the soul, those that the farmers of righteousness fill with spiritual wine through their efforts and sweat, accepted as the price of the fruits of piety. The holy Apostle will indeed persuade us of such an economy, “You are God’s building, God’s farm”» (1 Cor 3:9). Horsiesus exhorts his readers or listeners to fill their granaries with spiritual thoughts (which are to be understood to consist of «spiritual interpretations»):

... thanks to the teachings of our blessed and righteous father, Apa Pachomius, of all our other holy fathers, and of those who are still with us today. Indeed, they are springs of the water of life watering their green plantation, that is to say, these are, in reality, fountains of the water of life which irrigate their orchard, as it brings forth its green shoots (cf. Qoh 2:6), that is to say, we [...] spiritual, watering the vineyard of our souls with thoughts that are worthy of heaven and sayings that exhale their sweetness. For, «they leap on the mountains, they trample in the valleys» (Song 2:8), that is, the apostles and the prophets. And to us also it is said, «My brother, run; do as the gazelle and the young stag which are on the perfumed mountains» (Song 8:14).¹⁶⁹

The idea that the Scriptures are «for us» and are to be interpreted as applying to us is central to Alexandrian exegesis.¹⁷⁰

Another passage which illustrates the influence of the Alexandrian exegetical tradition is found in a work written at the end of the fourth century in which there unfolds a dialogue between two deacons of the church of Alexandria and Horsiesus. The deacons ask questions concerning the apparent contradictions to be found in the Scriptures, and Horsiesus replies that everything to be found in Scripture has an explanation (ἐρμηνεία) and that what had been written for the ancients in a carnal sense was now addressed to the children of the nuptial celebration in a spiritual sense.¹⁷¹ The distinction between the «flesh» and the «spirit» of the Scriptures also forms part of the tradition going back to Origen.¹⁷²

169 VEILLEUX, *Pachomian Koinonia* 3, 139-140. Coptic text: LEFORT, *Oeuvres de S. Pachôme et de ses disciples*, 70-71.

170 This idea, found already in Paul (1 Cor 9,8-10), is often used by Origen as an exegetical principle. Cf. COCCHINI, *Il Paolo di Origene*, 137-148.

171 W. F. CRUM, *Der Papyruscodex Saec. VI-VII der Philipps-Bibliothek in Cheltenham. Kopistische theologische Schriften* (Schriften der Wiss. Gesellsch. in Strassburg 18), Strassburg 1915, 72; LEFORT, *Les vies coptes*, 395-396.

172 See *PArch* 4, 2, 4.

There are indications that private reading of the Scriptures was nothing exceptional in the Pachomian monasteries. The rule prescribes that everyone should learn to read; «And if he (the newcomer) is illiterate, he shall go at the first, third, and sixth hours to someone who can teach and has been appointed for him. He shall stand before him and learn very studiously with all gratitude. Then the fundamentals of a syllable, the verbs, and nouns shall be written for him, and even if he does not want to, he shall be compelled to read». The next rule is equally insistent: «There shall be no one whatever in the monastery who does not learn to read and does not memorize something of the Scriptures. [One should learn by heart] at least the New Testament and the Psalter».¹⁷³ The insistence on a minimum level of literacy is reinforced by regulations concerning books. *Praec.* 25 gives the instruction that those who ask for a book should receive one, but should return it to its place after a week.¹⁷⁴ *Praec.* 100 orders that no one should leave a book open when he goes to a meal or to the hours of common prayer, and *Praec.* 101 gives the seconds in each house the responsibility of collecting, counting and returning the books to their own niche. Rules of this kind witness to a culture in which books are precious, but also form a normal and integral part of daily life.

3. CONCLUSION

The preceding review of certain aspects of the spiritual and intellectual world of early Egyptian monasticism in three different environments offers evidence that the cultivation of the interior life was effectively at the heart of the whole phenomenon, as Holl noted a century ago. Instead of conjecturing the existence of radically different types of monasticism in Egypt, with different sources of inspiration and different spiritual attitudes, it would be better to take as a working hypothesis the supposition of a common tradition with respect to the fundamental nature of the spiritual or interior life. Perhaps it was this tradition which permitted the application of the term «monachos» to ascetics who lived in considerably different exterior circumstances, during the course of the fourth century.

The spirituality of early Egyptian monasticism was based on one presupposition, namely, the possibility of progress in the spiritual life. This was closely linked to the idea of a spiritual journey, of a combat against the passions which

173 *Praecepta* 139-140; Eng. tr.: VEILLEUX, *Pachomian Koinonia* 2, Kalamazoo, Mich. 1981, 166.

174 See also *Institutes* 2 and *Regulations* 7.

obstructed the road to contemplation. The aim was union with God in the contemplative life and this aim was to be pursued by attention to oneself, self-knowledge and ascesis, that is to say the training of the spiritual athlete, who exerted himself with a view to obtaining the prize. This spiritual vision owed much to the Greek philosophic world as far as certain fundamental notions, such as *askesis*, were concerned, and for a significant portion of its terminology. The Greek philosophic tradition had first encountered the world of the Hebrew Scriptures in a significant way in the Works of Philo of Alexandria. Philo introduced to the reading of Scripture not only Greek philosophical ideas but also hermeneutical procedures developed from the reading of Classical authors. These were more extensively employed by Christian authors such as Origen under Philo's influence (who themselves also were at home in the Hellenistic philosophic world). Thus the text itself of Scripture, with the «spiritual» interpretation that went with it, became the vehicle for the transmission of the ascetical-spiritual program of the monastic world. Whatever else monks may have read, it is beyond doubt that the Scriptures formed the base of their spiritual and intellectual world. They read them, memorized them, repeated them, and constantly debated their correct interpretation.

This spiritual vision was to be elaborated and re-elaborated, refined and synthesized many times during the course of the development of the monastic literary tradition, particularly through the work of Evagrius Ponticus and John Cassian; notwithstanding variations and diversity of detail, essentially the same tradition and the same vision of the possibility of progressing spiritually is to be found in the great tradition which extends from Philo to Origen, to the fathers of the desert, to Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius and Cassian. It was a vision which Athanasius, who was influenced by the monastic movement and was himself an influence upon it, also shared. Notwithstanding the complex origins of this movement and the social forces bound up with it, the great masters, on whom the monastic tradition bestowed the title of «abba», played an important role in the development of their tradition. Among these we should mention Antony, Didymus, Pachomius and his successors such as Theodore and Horsiesus, Macarius of Egypt and many others less well known such as Paul of Tamma, about whom we know too little. It is useful to remember that Evagrius Ponticus, John Cassian and many others went to Egypt precisely because of the fame of the spiritual masters, and they found them to be such as they sought for.

EARLY CHRISTIAN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION. A CAUSE FOR EMBARRASSMENT OR A VIABLE APPROACH?¹

1. FORMULATING THE PROBLEM

a. The embarrassment of the modern interpreter

The development of the historical-critical approach to biblical texts over the past two centuries and its increasing acceptance in Christian circles, first Protestant and then Catholic, and more recently Orthodox, has led to an increasing sense of discomfort, if not embarrassment, with the vast body of interpretation inherited from the past, especially from the patristic period.² The symptoms of the problem are various. On the one hand, the modern reader/interpreter, educated to look for the original historical setting of the biblical books, as for any other piece of writing from the past, tries to explain the text in that historical setting, seeking to understand what the original author intended to say in so far as that is possible. Faced with patristic interpretations that may show no interest in such a procedure, he may conclude that the early Christian commentators followed no rules and operated capriciously, reading their own ideas into the biblical texts. In the best of cases, the modern interpreter, if he is not conversant with ancient procedures, regards the ancient explanation as naive or underdeveloped. This is particularly true of the allegorical exegesis so widespread in the ancient world. From the point of view of a modern interpreter, the history of exegesis is the progressive discovery of the unique value of the literal sense and

1 This essay was originally published in Italian: «L'antica interpretazione biblica cristiana: motivo di imbarazzo o approccio fatibile?», in *Storia e teologia all'incrocio: orizzonti e percorsi di una disciplina*, ed. M. Bielawski - M. Sheridan, Roma 2002, 17-61.

2 See THE PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL COMMISSION, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, Boston 1993, 101 (III, B, 2): «the allegorical interpretation of Scripture so characteristic of patristic exegesis runs the risk of being something of an embarrassment to people today». The document may be found also on the Vatican website: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/pcb_doc_index.htm.

past approaches are inevitably viewed as erroneous, superseded or based on philosophical principles that can no longer be accepted.³ The conclusion follows inevitably that a vast portion of the heritage of early Christian biblical interpretation is irrelevant to understanding the real meaning of the text, since the real meaning is equated with the original historical sense, that is, the sense intended by the original author.⁴

The problem is complicated by the relationship between patristic exegesis and that which we find already in New Testament documents, particularly the letters written by or attributed to Paul. Origen viewed Paul as the model exegete, the one who had given the correct rules and examples to follow in interpreting the Scriptures, especially the Old Testament.⁵ Although the modern historian of interpretation is able to note a considerable development in presuppositions

3 See, for example, T. J. KEEGAN, *Interpreting the Bible. A Popular Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, New York 1985, 15-17 for a brief sketch of earlier approaches in which the allegorical method is connected with Platonist philosophy and the rediscovery of the literal sense with the Aristotelian approach of Thomas Aquinas. This is ironic in view of Plato's own rejection of allegorical interpretation. In fact the procedure pre-dates Plato. On the other hand, there is no doubt that a Platonic view of reality in which the visible is the manifestation of an invisible world provided additional impetus to discovering a hidden or allegorical meaning. For the relationship between Platonism and the allegorical sense in Origen, see M. SIMONETTI, *Lettera e/o Allegoria: Un contributo alla storia dell'esegesi patristica*, Roma 1985, 79-84. For a similar more nuanced sketch of the relationship between literal and spiritual sense, see R.E. BROWN - S.M. SCHNEIDERS, «Hermeneutics», in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. R.E. Brown - J.A. Fitzmyer - R.E. Murphy, Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1990, 1146-1165. Brown is clearly aware that ancient and modern commentators operate on very different concepts of the «literal sense» and that defining what is meant by the «literal sense» is not an easy matter (see p. 1148). It is, however, symptomatic of the problem that Brown speaks of the «exaggeration of the spiritual sense» (p. 1155). It is pointless to call «exaggerated» an approach that is based on completely different presuppositions about the nature of the text itself. This suggests that the modern critic is not fully aware of the gap that separates his mental world from the ancient one. The problem is greater than defining what is meant by «literal sense».

4 This is of course a simplification, since the concept of «original author» in texts with a long redactional and interpretative history is no simple matter. In interpreting ancient interpretations one must also keep in mind what the ancient reader thought about the author of the ancient text. Brown offers the following definition of the literal sense: «The sense which the human author directly intended and which the written word conveyed» (BROWN, «Hermeneutics», 1148). As we shall see, patristic authors would hardly have agreed with this definition and what they called the «obvious sense» might be something quite different.

5 For Origen's debt to and use of Paul, see F. COCCHINI, *Il Paolo di Origene* (Verba Seniorum N.S. 11), Roma 1992, especially 117-148.

and methodology between Paul and Origen, nevertheless there is also undeniable continuity.⁶ Paul engages in allegorical exegesis and indeed uses the terminology, although various modern writers tend to minimize or restrict his use of it, and even suggest that he used it incorrectly.⁷ In fact, this merely reveals that his procedures are an embarrassment for modern interpreters. The Pauline use of allegorical interpretation has led to opposing conclusions. Some suggest that he was simply mistaken in adopting such procedures, which leads to the conclusion that his interpretation is invalid. Others recently, in particular R.B. Hays, have attempted to defend his interpretation, even suggesting that it could serve as a model today.⁸ This position has been firmly rejected by R.N. Longenecker who speaks of the «cultural and time-conditioned nature of their methods» (the New Testament interpreters of Scripture) and the need to recontextualize their proclamation «in the varied cultures and circumstances of our day».⁹

In this context it is interesting to note the manner in which the document of the Biblical Commission has dealt with these questions. As already noted, it speaks of embarrassment when referring to the methods of patristic exegesis (see note 1), but, in discussing the interpretation of Scripture present within the New Testament writings, the document explains that the authors of the

6 The most notable developments may be seen in the fact that the Scriptures of the Old Testament are for Origen not recognizable as Scripture except in the light of the coming of Christ, something that Paul would hardly have accepted. For Paul they were the only Scriptures. See ORIGEN, *PArch* 4, 1, 6. Origen also had at his disposal and made copious use of the vast heritage of allegorical interpretation of Philo of Alexandria. Likewise Origen was able to make use of the New Testament writings, which provided an important source for his interpretations of the Old Testament.

7 Since at least the time of Luther there has prevailed in the west a very negative attitude toward the use of allegorical interpretation. See W. KÜMMEL, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its Problems*, New York 1972, 22-23. This has led to attempts to exculpate Paul from the fault of allegorical interpretation by distinguishing between typological interpretation and allegorical interpretation. Paul would have engaged in the former, which consists in seeing a correspondence between historical facts and figures of the Old Testament and their fulfillment in the event of Christ. The majority of more recent commentators on this subject do not admit that this distinction has a real foundation in antiquity but prefer to regard typology as at best a subspecies of allegory. See M. SIMONETTI, *Lettera e/o Allegoria: Un contributo alla storia dell'esegesi patristica*, Roma 1985, 24-25 and the more recent summary of this controversy by E.A. CLARK, *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity*, Princeton 1999, 70-78.

8 See especially the discussion in R.B. HAYS, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, New Haven 1989, 178-192.

9 R. LONGENECKER, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, Grand Rapids, Mich. ²1999, xxxiv – xxxix.

latter had «recourse to the ideas and procedures for interpretation current in their time. To require them to conform to modern scientific methods would be anachronistic».¹⁰ One wonders why it would be «anachronistic» in the case of the New Testament writings, while patristic exegesis is a cause for embarrassment. From a theological point of view, certainly, there is a difference between the writings included in the canon of the New Testament and those not included. The writings included within the canon always enjoyed an authority that the others did not. From a historical point of view, however, they all belong to the same general cultural world and some of those not included antedate the last writings included in the canon. When some of them were being written, the New Testament canon was not yet clearly formed. Thus, from the perspective of a historical investigation into the methods and mentality involved in ancient exegesis, there should be no distinction between canonical and non-canonical writings.¹¹ The more fundamental question is that suggested by the use of the word «anachronistic» in the document of the Biblical Commission and the term «time-conditioned», adjectives that apply both to the methods of interpretation used in the writings of the New Testament and to those used in the patristic period in general. Why would it be anachronistic to apply modern rules to New Testament interpretation of Scriptural texts and why are the rules and procedures used in such interpretation «time-conditioned»? That is the question we shall attempt to address in this article.

b. The reaction against modern interpretation and the promotion of patristic exegesis

One of the most common complaints about modern historical study of the Scriptures is that it results in their dissection and fragmentation.¹² Since modern critical scholarship tends to view the texts from the point of view of historical development, later texts, which clearly show progress over earlier ones in

10 THE PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL COMMISSION *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, III, A, 2.

11 On this point see in particular the comments of E. NORELLI, *La Bibbia nell'antichità cristiana I. Da Gesù a Origene*, Bologna 1993, 12-13.

12 NORELLI, *La Bibbia nell'antichità cristiana I*, 12-13. As Norelli notes, the «canonical criticism» promoted by Childs among others, is a reaction against this tendency and an attempt to reconstitute the unity of the Scriptures. However, as we shall argue, the unity proposed by Childs and that perceived in antiquity are based on very different presuppositions.

terms of theology and even moral teaching, inevitably seem to reduce the earlier ones to objects of archaeological interest. The text itself loses its value as a locus of revelation and becomes a witness to the historical process that lies behind it. It has been argued that before the advent of historical criticism, the reader could enter into the narrative world of the Scriptures without difficulty. Now that world has become distant and difficult to enter.¹³ From this point of view the world of patristic exegesis tends to represent an idyllic age in which the text of the Scriptures was accessible and had an immediate message for the reader. Those who would urge the continued relevance of patristic exegesis also suggest that modern exegesis (that of the last two centuries) displays a «philosophical bias toward naturalistic reductionism» or is the result of post-Enlightenment historicist criticism.¹⁴ It has also been suggested that the problem with modern exegesis is a methodological orientation that seeks to eliminate the faith of the church as the true key of interpretation and destroys the unity of the Scriptures.¹⁵ Likewise it is asserted that the problem of modern exegesis is one of incorrect methodology, that an evolutionary model has been adopted (what is simple is more primitive). Methods and models of the natural sciences have been adopted for the study of history. Only that which is positive, empirically observable can be admitted in the realm of exegesis. Thus a direct manifestation of the divine can only be regarded as myth. Modern exegesis would thus involve a reduction of history to philosophy. The debate concerning modern exegesis is not essentially a debate among historians, but a philosophical debate. While admitting that a simple return to the exegesis of the Fathers is not desirable, nevertheless patristic exegesis cannot be eliminated by describing it as «allegorical».¹⁶

13 See especially H.W. FREI, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative. A Study in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Hermeneutics*, New Haven 1974, and the observations of J.J. O'KEEFE, «“A Letter that Killeth”: Toward a Reassessment of Antiochene Exegesis, or Diodore, Theodore, and Theodoret on the Psalms», *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8 (2000) 87.

14 See the «General Introduction» by T.C. ODEN, *Genesis 1-11* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament I; ed. A. Louth in collaboration with M. Conti, Downers Grove, Il. 2001, xvii.

15 See J. RATZINGER, «L'interpretazione biblica in conflitto (problemi del fondamento ed orientamento dell'esegesi contemporanea)», in I. de la Potterie et al., *L'esegesi cristiana oggi*, Casale Monferrato 1991, 98-99.

16 RATZINGER, «L'interpretazione biblica in conflitto», 111-114. Although some of these generalizations might apply to some modern authors, they hardly seem an adequate characterization of the vast body of modern critical study of the Bible.

Unfortunately much of this discussion is often conducted at a level of abstraction that amounts to a historical vacuum, without reference to the specific presuppositions, methods and results of patristic exegesis. One can understand the anxiety over eliminating the transcendent from the interpretation of Scripture, but to reduce the problem to one of philosophy or methodological presuppositions is equally questionable. A problem of history is involved and more precisely one of the historical consciousness or awareness of the dimensions of history that separates ancient and modern methods of exegesis. It is our purpose here to suggest that describing ancient spiritual exegesis as «exaggerated» misses the point. It is not that it is exaggerated, but rather that it uses rules and is based on presuppositions that we cannot share today. It is equally pointless to suggest that we should engage in the patristic style of interpretation today without examining the exegetical rules and their presuppositions that formed the mental world of those in antiquity. It is not enough to examine the philosophical underpinnings of modern exegetical methodology. One must also try to understand the «philosophical» presuppositions of the ancient interpreters. The problem can also be formulated in terms of a question: why is it that almost no one actually engages in a patristic style of interpretation today? One reason is that very few people understand the rules of patristic exegesis. But the real reason, we shall suggest, is that our historical consciousness prevents that. Our awareness of the lengthy historical process, our *forma mentis*, makes certain presuppositions of ancient exegesis untenable and the rules based on them unworkable. To make this clear, it will be necessary to examine in detail some of the common rules and procedures of patristic exegesis and their presuppositions.

2. THE WORLD OF ANCIENT EXEGESIS

a. The nature of the text – its exactness or precision

The presuppositions of the ancient interpreter about the nature of the biblical text are revealed above all by the way in which details of that text are handled. One of the most striking phenomena in ancient exegesis is the manner in which a new meaning different from the obvious (to the modern reader) literal sense of the text is generated by insisting on the significance of a detail that in any other text would be regarded as having no special significance. Indeed in some cases, as we shall see, this new sense runs directly counter to the originally intended or «obvious» sense of the text. This technique has also been described recently

as «close reading of the text».¹⁷ It is best to illustrate the procedure with some concrete examples.

Origen

In his twenty-seventh homily on Numbers, Origen interprets the figures of Moses and Aaron in the verse «And these are the stages of the children of Israel, as they went out from the land of Egypt with their host by the hand of Moses and Aaron» (Num 33:1 LXX) to represent allegorically two aspects of the quest for perfection in the spiritual life. Moses stands for «knowledge of the Law» and Aaron for «skill in making sacrifices and immolations to God». He then goes on to insist on the detail «by the hand of Moses and Aaron» from the fact that the singular is used (the hand) instead of the plural: «Nevertheless, these are not two hands, but one. For “by the hand of Moses and Aaron” the Lord led them forth, and not by the “hands” of Moses and Aaron. There is a single work for each hand and a single fulfillment of perfection». In fact this interpretation runs contrary to the literal sense of the phrase, which is plural, even though the singular is used. The use of the singular for the plural was a well-known figure of speech in antiquity, clearly identified by ancient rhetoricians and known as *synecdoche*.¹⁸ Origen was perfectly well aware of this rhetorical figure and cites it several times in explaining both scriptural and non-scriptural quotations.¹⁹ Why did he choose to ignore it in this case? The clues to understanding his choice are found in the same passage where, prior to giving the explanation about the «hand» of Moses and Aaron, he had explained that only by giving a spiritual interpretation could one arrive at «an understanding worthy of the Laws of the Holy Spirit». Simply knowing the places in the wilderness where the children of Israel had camped would be of no use nor would it afford an occasion for spiritual progress. Origen continues:

The point is especially clear when we see what great care the Lord took in describing those stages so that their description would be introduced in a second place. For those names are recounted, granted with some differences, at the point when the children of Israel are said to have left each different place and to have

17 E. A. CLARK, *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity*, Princeton 1999, 118.

18 H. LAUSBERG, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, Stuttgart 3 1990, 296 §573,3.

19 See *CCels* 4,77, 14-16, citing Euripides; *HomJr* 13,3; *ComMt* 12,38,34 (noting that Elias stands for all the prophets).

camped at it. And now again the Word of God orders Moses to describe them. Moreover, because of the very fact that the description is repeated a second time, it seems to me we have a detail in harmony with the mystery of the interpretation we have suggested.²⁰

The presumption is that the text in its every detail is the work of the Holy Spirit. Moses has transcribed what he was ordered to describe. Numbers 33:2 in fact states that «Moses wrote down their starting places and their stages by the Word of the Lord». The order of the texts and the grammatical details are not the work of a human author, but of the Holy Spirit. Origen's logic proceeds as follows. Since the text is of divine origin, it must have a meaning that is compatible²¹ with that origin and useful²² for human readers, for God would not give us something of no value. The details of the text are clues to the real meaning, the «mystery of the interpretation». Thus the normal rules of grammar and rhetoric may not apply, since the real meaning is not on the surface. It is hidden. This in fact is the significance of Origen's use of the term «mystery» in the context of interpretation of scriptural texts.²³ Uncovering the hidden meaning, the «mystery», is the work of the interpreter. Origen states this quite explicitly in the preface to Book I of his work *On First Principles*:

Then there is the doctrine that the scriptures were composed through the Spirit of God and that they have not only that meaning which is obvious, but also another which is hidden from the majority of readers. For the contents of scripture are the outward forms of certain mysteries and the images of divine things. On this point the entire Church is unanimous, that while the whole law is spiritual, the inspired meaning is not recognized by all, but only by those who are gifted with the grace of the Holy Spirit in the word of wisdom and knowledge.²⁴

20 ORIGEN, *HomNum* 27,6. English Translation from R. A. GREER, *Origen* (The Classics of Western Spirituality), New York 1979, 253.

21 The idea that the meaning of the text must be suitable to or worthy of God is an important criterion for the evaluation of the interpretation of Scriptural texts beginning with Philo, if not before. See M. SHERIDAN, «*Digne deo*. A Traditional Greek Principle of Interpretation in Latin Dress», in in this volume, 391-408.

22 For the criterion that meaning must be «useful» (ὠφέλεια), see M. SIMONETTI in *Origene Dizionario, la cultura, il pensiero, le opere*, ed. A. Monaci Castagno, Roma 2000, 429.

23 See A. MONACI CASTAGNO, «Esoterico/Essoterico», in *Origene Dizionario, la cultura, il pensiero, le opere*, Roma 2000, 144-150.

24 *PArch* 1, *praef.* 8. The English translation is from ORIGEN, *On First Principles*, tr. - ed. G. W. Butterworth, New York 1966, 5. The Latin text of Rufinus reads: 8. *Tum deinde quod per spiritum dei scripturae conscriptae sint et sensum habeant non eum solum, qui in*

Since the text itself is of divine origin, it cannot be analyzed as if it were a normal human production using the well-established canons of rhetoric. The text has an esoteric character and it is the interpreter's task to look for the clues to decoding the hidden message.

It might be objected that in this passage Origen is already using an allegorical interpretation and therefore the use of such textual details is due to the impetus of the allegory in progress or dependent on it. Although it is true in this case that the interpretation of the detail carries on the allegory, it can be argued that it is the understanding of the text as an encoded document that is the basis for the allegorical explanation.

Additional examples may help to explain and illustrate this phenomenon. In commenting on Num 30:3 «A man, a man who shall vow a vow to the Lord, or swear an oath, or bind himself with an obligation upon his soul, he shall not break his word; all that shall come out of his mouth he shall do»,²⁵ Origen explains the doubling of the word «man» at the beginning of the verse as a reference to the distinction between the «exterior man» and the «interior man» that is found in 2 Cor 4:16.²⁶ The modern explanation is that it represents a Hebraism (one which, however, is not found in the Masoretic text) signifying nothing more than «every man». Before Origen, Philo had already seized on this textual peculiarity to make it refer to «the man who puts virtue into practice».²⁷ In this case, Origen derives the meaning not from an allegory already in progress but by using the procedure of interpreting Scripture by means of Scripture, another rule or procedure of ancient exegesis that depends on certain presuppositions about the text that the modern world does not share. To this procedure we shall return later.

manifesto est, sed et alium quendam latentem quam plurimos. Formae enim sunt haec quae descripta sunt sacramentorum quorundam et divinarum rerum imagines. De quo totius ecclesiae una sententia est, esse quidem omnem legem spiritalem, non tamen ea, quae spirat lex, esse omnibus nota nisi his solis, quibus gratia spiritus sancti in verbo sapientiae ac scientiae condonatur.

25 LXX: ἄνθρωπος ἄνθρωπος, ὃς ἂν εὐξῆται εὐχὴν κυρίῳ ἢ ὁμώσει ὄρκον ἢ ὀρίσῃται ὀρισμῷ περὶ τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτοῦ, οὐ βεβηλώσει τὸ ῥῆμα αὐτοῦ· πάντα, ὅσα ἂν ἐξέλθῃ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ, οἴσῃ. For comment on the significance of the LXX text, see G. DORIVAL, *La Bible d'Alexandrie 4. Les Nombres*, Paris 1994, 511.

26 ORIGENES, *Homélies sur les Nombres* 3, ed. L. Doutreleau (SCh 461), Paris 2001, 166-167 (Homily 24,2).

27 PHILO, *Gig.* 33.

Another variation on this type of exploitation of the textual details to uncover hidden meanings is found in Origen's Homily 15 on Gen 45:25-26 where he dwells on the significance of the phrases: «to go up» and «to go down».

We should observe in reading the holy Scriptures how «to go up» and «to go down» are employed in each individual passage. For if we were to give diligent consideration, we would discover that almost never is anyone said to have gone down to a holy place nor is anyone related to have gone up to a blameworthy place. These observations show that the divine Scripture was not composed, as it seems to most, in illiterate and uncultivated language, but was adapted in accordance with the discipline of divine instruction. Nor is Scripture devoted so much to historical narratives as to things and ideas which are mystical. You will find it written, therefore, that those who are born of the seed of Abraham have gone down into Egypt and again that the sons of Israel have gone up out of Egypt. Indeed Scripture speaks thus also of Abraham himself: «But Abraham went up out of Egypt into the desert, he and his wife and all that was his, and Lot with him» (Gen 13:1).²⁸

Here the comparison of details in different texts serves to verify assumptions about the nature of the text, which in turn provide the basis for this kind of interpretation of details. The basic assumption is that Scripture is devoted to «things and ideas that are mystical».²⁹ There is a hidden message lying beneath the surface of the text, which can be retrieved by analyzing the details. The significance of these details does not depend on or at least is not restricted to their function on the literal level of the narrative, because the historical narrative is not the main message of the text.³⁰ The divine author has arranged all the Scrip-

28 *HomGn* 15,1. The English translation is from ORIGEN, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, tr. R.E. Heine (FC 71), Washington, D.C. 1982, 203.

29 Origen, *HomGn* 15,1: *Quae observationes ostendunt Scripturam divinam non, ut plurimis videtur, inerudito et agresti sermone compositam, sed secundum disciplinam divinae eruditionis aptatam neque tantum historicis narrationibus quantum rebus et sensibus mysticis servientem.*

30 The practice of giving unusual significance to such details receives additional theoretical support from Origen's theory that, although all of Scripture has a «spiritual» sense, not all of it has a «bodily» sense: «For our contention with regard to the whole of divine scripture is that it all has a spiritual meaning, but not all a bodily meaning; for the bodily meaning is often proved to be an impossibility» (*PArch* 4, 3, 5). Earlier in the same chapter Origen offers many examples of the missing «bodily» meaning. No less an expert than Simonetti has suggested that Origen is «too diligent in the application of this criterion», using it not only in cases where there is an obvious improbability, but even in cases where the text is employing metaphors or images. He suggests that this «hyper liter-

tures in this way so that there is an additional hidden message that can be deciphered through attention to the details.

Philo

Origen was of course hardly the first to approach the Scriptures in this manner. Among the predecessors who influenced him strongly were Philo and Paul. Some examples from Philo should serve to illustrate his approach to the text. In commenting on the blessings of Jacob in Gen 49:17,³¹ Philo asks why Jacob used the word «horseman» (ἵππεύς) while Moses in his song in Exod 15:1³² used the word «the rider» (ἀναβάτης). In fact the words are synonyms, a phenomenon well known to ancient rhetorical analysis, and Philo was certainly aware of this.³³ But he chose to find a significant difference of meaning in the two words, which then served as a basis for the allegory he wished to develop. The «horseman» is one who knows how to discipline the horse, which allegorically represents the passions, while the «rider» is one who is carried where the horse wants to go, that is, he is carried away by the passions.³⁴ Thus the horseman represents one who has acquired virtue and, if he falls, he falls backward (Gen 49:17) and is not trampled by the horse/passions.

Philo makes use of this procedure many times in order to find hidden teaching in the text. The point of departure for his tractate on the cherubim is the distinction between the synonymous or parallel terms in Gen 3:23-24: «cast forth» (ἐξαπέστειλεν) and «sent forth» (ἐξέβαλεν). On the basis of the distinction that he finds in these terms he is going to build his interpretation: «He who is sent forth is not thereby prevented from returning. He who is cast forth by God is subject to eternal banishment». Philo is perfectly well aware of the

alism» multiplies the difficulties of the literal level of the text (*Lettera e/o Allegoria*, 85). Such a judgment reflects of course a modern point of view. Origen, with his very different presuppositions about the nature of the text, would hardly have agreed.

31 Gen 49:17 καὶ γεννηθῆτω Δαν ὄφιν ἐφ' ὁδοῦ ἐγκαθήμενος ἐπὶ τρίβου, δάκνων πτέρναν ἵππου, καὶ πεσεῖται ὁ ἵππεύς εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω. «And let Dan be a serpent in the way, besetting the path, biting the heel of the horse (and the horseman shall fall backward)».

32 Exod 15:1 Τότε ᾄσεν Μωϋσῆς καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ Ἰσραὴλ τὴν ᾠδὴν ταύτην τῷ θεῷ καὶ εἶπαν λέγοντες Ἀἰσώμεν τῷ κυρίῳ, ἐνδόξως γὰρ δεδόξασται ἵππον καὶ ἀναβάτην ἔρριπεν εἰς θάλασσαν. «Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song to God, and spoke, saying, Let us sing to the Lord, for he is very greatly glorified: horse and rider he has thrown into the sea».

33 See H. LAUSBERG, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, Stuttgart ³1990, 330, §650.

34 PHILO, *Leg.* II, 25-26 (99-108).

concept of «synonym» which he employs elsewhere to identify terms that in fact are not really synonyms, but which for reasons of generating interpretations he wishes to identify.³⁵ His rationale for doing this is the nature of the text: «The words are not set down at random, but chosen with a knowledge of the things to which he (Moses) applies them in their proper and exact sense».³⁶ The fact that Philo feels the need to justify this procedure shows that he is aware that it runs contrary to the norms of standard rhetorical analysis.

A similar example is found in the work «On Agriculture» where Philo distinguishes between the «farmer» and «the one who works the earth». Noah is designated in Gen 9:20 as a «farmer» (γεωργός), while in Gen 4:2 Cain is described as «one working the earth» (ἐργαζόμενος τὴν γῆν). Philo wishes to build an allegorical interpretation of the text on the basis of this distinction. Noah will represent the one who cultivates the soil of the soul, weeding out the vices and nurturing the virtues, while Cain does not care about such activity, but only immediate gratification. But first Philo prepares the text to yield this interpretation by insisting on the distinction between the two terms. They are not in fact synonyms as the casual reader might think but rather the result of a precise knowledge and exact selection of terms:

Most men, not knowing the nature of things, necessarily go wrong in giving them names. For things which are well considered and subjected as it were to dissection have appropriate designations attached to them in consequence; while others having been presented in a confused state receive things that are not thoroughly accurate. Moses, being abundantly equipped with the knowledge that has to do with things, is in the habit of using names that are perfectly apt and expressive.³⁷

In other words, the text, by its very nature, contains codified messages that can be decodified through careful attention to the precise nuances of the terms. Behind this lies of course a whole theory about the origin and nature of language that owes much to the Stoic philosophical tradition.³⁸

35 E.g., *Leg.* III, 252, where he identifies «grass» and «bread» of Gen 3:18-19; *Cher.* 14,1 where he identifies «joy» and «Eden» as synonyms.

36 *Cher.* 1,1. Translation from: *Philo* 2, ed. F.H. Colson - G.H. Whitaker (LCL 227), Cambridge, Mass. 1929, 9.

37 *Agr.* 1,1. Translation from: *Philo* 3, ed. F.H. Colson - G.H. Whitaker (LCL 247), Cambridge, Mass. 1930, 109.

38 For the Stoic theory of the nature and origin of language see M. POHLENZ, *La Stoa, Storia di un movimento spirituale* 1, Firenze 1967, 57-81.

Didymus of Alexandria

Following in the tradition of Philo and Origen, Didymus of Alexandria also reads texts with the same attention to detail. In dealing with the story of Abraham and Hagar in Gen 16:15, Didymus comments:

It is plausible to say that it was to establish the fact that Hagar was a serious woman and Ishmael an authentic son of Abraham that Scripture went out of its way to remark that Hagar bore a son «to Abram». What follows is clear as to the literal sense, but let us examine too the anagogical sense. When the person who is making progress gives birth according to the goal assigned by the master, the child he bears is not to be despised. The verse, then, applies the metaphorical notion of generation to the master who correctly teaches and who thus provides profitable seed; (this is why) it is said: «Hagar bore to Abram». And the proof that the meaning is indeed what I have indicated according to the terms of Scripture is that, in the following phrase: «And Abram called the name of his son», the Word adds: «whom Hagar bore him». If an idea (like the one I suggested) were not in the background here, the text would simply have said: «And Abram named his son», without adding «whom she bore him».³⁹

In this passage Didymus is using what might be considered pleonasms (a term known and used in antiquity)⁴⁰ in the text in order to arrive at a spiritual sense for the text. The pleonasms «to Abram» and «whom she bore him» serve as signals that there is something in the text to be deciphered. In this case the hermeneutical key is the idea of education, which Philo had already used in his pioneering interpretation of these texts.⁴¹

A little earlier in the same commentary Didymus had detected a significant difference in synonymous phrases in Gen 15:5 and 16:10:

It is not implausible that one who is living the life of a beginner should also be judged worthy of a blessing, for, if his progress continues toward the appropriate goal, he will arrive at perfection. But notice that, when the text was talking about virtue — for it is from virtue that the true seed of Abraham comes — after God

39 DIDYME L'AVEUGLE, *Sur la Genèse II* (SCh 244), Paris 1978, 234. The English translation is from M. SHERIDAN, *Genesis 12-50*, (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament 2), Downers Grove, IL 2002, 50.

40 See R.D. ANDERSON JR., *Glossary of Greek Rhetorical Terms Connected to Methods of Argumentation, Figures and Tropes from Anaximenes to Quintilian*, Leuven 2000, 102 and H. LAUSBERG, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, Stuttgart 31990, 250, §462, 1.

41 See especially *Congr.* 17-24 and 71-80 where Philo interprets Hagar to represent the pro-paedeutic studies (grammar, music, mathematics, etc.) and Sarah symbolizes virtue.

had led him outside and said to him: «Look toward heaven, and number the stars if you can count them», he had added: «So shall your descendants be»,⁴² and that, in the case of Hagar, it is not said: «Your descendants will be like the stars», but only: «They will not be able to be numbered for their multitude». Can you not conclude from this difference that the progeny of that which is perfect is luminous, and that which pertains to the introductory level is not?⁴³

The point of the promise in both cases was that the descendants would be innumerable; the expressions are in fact synonymous, because in both cases the descendants are too numerous to be counted. But Didymus, using the interpretation already introduced by Philo in which Sarah represents virtue and Hagar the propaedeutic cycle of studies, sees in the comparison of the descendants with the stars a significant difference. Sarah's progeny are the virtues, while Hagar's are only the encyclopedic or propaedeutic studies of grammar, music, etc. The specific interpretation of the detail depends of course on being already within a larger allegorical interpretation of the whole text regarding the call of Abraham.

Although the examples examined so far have been from authors of the Alexandrian tradition, the practice of paying close attention to textual details in order to extract hidden meaning from them is by no means limited to this tradition. It is abundantly present in the most prolific representative of the so-called Antiochian school, John Chrysostom. Chrysostom is quite explicit in urging attention to the details or, as he frequently call it, «the precision» (ἀκριβεία) of the text. It is worth quoting at length one of his programmatic statements on the subject in order to understand his attitude toward the text:

Wonderful is the power of Sacred Scripture and immense the wealth of ideas concealed in its expressions. Hence it behooves us to attend precisely and give ourselves to close study so as to reap the lavish benefits it offers. You see, the reason Christ himself gave this command, «Search the Scriptures», (John 5:39) was that, far from idly listening to the mere reading, we should rather descend to its very depths and be in a position to grasp the true sense of Scripture. This, after all, is the way with Scripture: in a few words it is often possible to find a great number of ideas. Its teachings, you see, are divine, not human, and consequently you can see it all composed in a manner opposite to human wisdom. What that way is, I will tell you: in the latter case – I mean human wisdom – people's whole interest is concentrated on the sequence of words, whereas in this case

42 Gen 15:5.

43 DIDYME L'AVEUGLE, *Sur la Genèse* II, 222. The English translation is from M. SHERIDAN, *Genesis* 12-50, 48

it is completely different. No study of Scripture is about words, their beauty or sequence: it has of itself divine grace resplendent upon it and its sayings have their own beauty. With that other writing you can grasp the sense only after a great amount of nit picking, whereas in this case, as you know, often a short phrase suffices for us to piece out the complete message.⁴⁴

This passage, taken from the beginning of Chrysostom's thirty-seventh homily on Genesis is obviously an apology for the kind of interpretation in which he has been engaging and intends to continue. His assertion that Scripture is «composed in a manner opposite to human wisdom» means that it is not subject to the norms of rhetorical composition or analysis, a subject with which Chrysostom himself was very well acquainted since he had studied with the most famous rhetorician of his day, Libanius. The statement is also somewhat ironic, at least from a modern point of view, for, although he will not apply the ancient norms of rhetorical analysis, he does devote much attention to analyzing words and their precise position.

Chrysostom uses the term «precision» (ἀκρίβεια) more frequently by far than any other author in antiquity and it is a principal key to understanding his view of the text of Scripture. He exhorts his hearers to «recognize clearly the precision of Sacred Scripture in recounting nothing to us as of no importance».⁴⁵ This extends even to the briefest phrase or syllable. One should not «pass by even a brief phrase or single syllable contained in the Holy Scriptures. After all, they are not simply words, but words of the Holy Spirit, and hence the treasure to be found in even a single syllable is great».⁴⁶ Chrysostom frequently appeals to this notion of «precision» as a preface to finding a meaning in an otherwise insignificant detail. Thus he reminds his audience of «the precision of Sacred Scripture» as he prepares to place great weight on the particle «however» (δὲ) in Gen 2:20 «For Adam, however, there proved to be no helpmate of his kind». The importance of this particle, he explains at some length, is that it emphasizes that all the other living creatures, which Adam had named, were greatly inferior to him and irrational. None of these were adequate for Adam. It is a way of

44 CHRYSTOSTOM, *Hom. Gen.* 37,1. (PG 53, 341-342). The translations of Chrysostom are taken from: JOHN CHRYSTOSTOM, *Homilies on Genesis 1-17*, tr. R.C. Hill (FC 42), Washington, D.C. 1986, 340.

45 CHRYSTOSTOM, *Hom. Gen.* 33,4 (PG 53, 303).

46 CHRYSTOSTOM, *Hom. Gen.* 15,3 (PG 53, 199a). The insistence that the words, although written by Moses, are not his, but those of the Holy Spirit, is frequent in Chrysostom. See for example *Hom. Gen.* 49,1.

teaching that the woman about to be created is «in no way inferior to him» and is «different and immeasurably superior» to the other animals.⁴⁷

The same admonition to note the «precision of Scripture» precedes his explanation of the phrase «everything they had acquired in Charran» from Gen 12:5. The explanation of this detail is that Abraham had carried nothing with him from the Chaldeans, but had left everything to his brother. He took with him to the land of Canaan only the things acquired in Charran in order «to show everyone through his prosperity God's provident care for him».⁴⁸ Similarly Chrysostom dwells on the phrase «very rich» in the description of Abraham when he left Egypt in Gen 13:2. The precision of Scripture here in describing him as very rich is for us «to learn the inventiveness of God's wisdom and providence displayed in favor of the good man as well as his boundless and extraordinary power».⁴⁹ This is shown by the fact that Abraham had gone to Egypt under pressure of the famine and now is suddenly described as leaving «very rich». The same presupposition regarding the nature of Scripture is to be applied also in the case of stories that are, on the face of it, scandalous, as in the case of Lot's daughters in Gen 19:31-32. Chrysostom comments: «There is nothing written there idly and to no purpose;⁵⁰ instead, everything is said carefully and to our advantage, even if we don't understand parts of it. You see, we can't understand everything precisely; on the contrary, even if we try to assign causes for some things to the extent possible to us, yet it still holds within it some treasure that is hidden and difficult to interpret».⁵¹ Applying these criteria, Chrysostom manages to rationalize and make excuses for the conduct of Lot and his daughters. He declares, «let no one ever presume to condemn the just man or his daughters», and even asks, «Do you see how they did this from a right attitude».⁵² Thus he manages to arrive at an acceptably edifying interpretation of the text, even though the text as it stands appears to condemn the incest in Lot's house.

47 CHRYSOSTOM, *Hom. Gen.* 15, 4-5 (PG 53, 119b-120b).

48 CHRYSOSTOM, *Hom. Gen.* 31,18 (PG 53, 290).

49 CHRYSOSTOM, *Hom. Gen.* 33,4 (PG 53, 306-307).

50 The phrase «There is nothing written there idly and to no purpose» (οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄπλῶς καὶ εἰκῇ γέγραπται) is one of Chrysostom's most characteristic phrases, being the negative expression of the idea of «usefulness» (ὠφέλεια), translated here also as «to our advantage». See also note 21 above.

51 CHRYSOSTOM, *Hom. Gen.* 44,18 (PG 54, 410-411).

52 CHRYSOSTOM, *Hom. Gen.* 44,21 (PG 54, 411-412).

By applying this presupposition and technique consistently Chrysostom is able constantly to squeeze out moral lessons from the details of the text. In fact he actually describes this as his program: «You see, it was not of himself that Moses proposed these matters to us, but under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. So let us see today also what he wants to teach us. You see, it is not idly or to no purpose that he proposes to us the lives of good people; rather, it is for us to emulate their virtue and become imitators of their good deeds».⁵³ Then acting on this advice he asks why Isaac's age is mentioned in Gen 25:20. «It is to teach us the greatness of Isaac's patience by signifying precisely the number of years he passed without children, so that we, too, may imitate the good man and thus implore God with supplication when seeking something from Him».⁵⁴ Even the fact that one expression is used instead of another that could have been used can be employed for the purpose of moral edification. In Gen 29:12 the text says that Rebecca «ran» to tell her father Laban about Jacob. Chrysostom notes that the text could have said that she «went off» to report what had occurred. But in using the word «ran» the text wanted to instruct us about «the ardor that marked their hospitality».⁵⁵

Although Chrysostom usually does not resort to allegorical interpretations, his attitude toward the text is not significantly different from those who did. It is a mistake to think that his concern for the precision of the text reflects an interest in the literal meaning of the text in a modern sense.⁵⁶ For him as well as for the Alexandrian tradition, the text contains hidden messages that can be decoded through attention to the details of the text. Chrysostom's hermeneutical key is moral exhortation and edification. That, he presumes, is why the text has been given to us. This legitimates the search for moral edification in every detail, even syllable, as he himself suggests.

53 CHRYSTOSTOM, *Hom. Gen.* 49,1 (PG 54, 444).

54 CHRYSTOSTOM, *Hom. Gen.* 49,3 (PG 54, 444).

55 CHRYSTOSTOM, *Hom. Gen.* 55,5 (PG 54, 480)]

56 See R.C. Hill, in ST. JOHN CHRYSTOSTOM, *Homilies on Genesis* (FC 74), Washington, D.C. 1986, 18, who suggests that the insistence of the Antiochian school on the literal sense of Scripture is connected to the idea of the «precision» (ἀκρίβεια) of the text. On the contrary, it may be argued that the Alexandrian school was just as interested in the precision of the text. The prodigious text critical work undertaken by Origen was motivated by a desire to have a precise and accurate text, because the text itself was understood to be the work of the Holy Spirit. The method of interpretation, allegorical or not, does not depend on that presupposition.

It has been urged that Augustine brought the earlier hermeneutical traditions to a new synthesis, that he understood how distorting a «free-floating allegorical reading of the biblical texts could be» and that he might be called «the father of “semiotics”, the theory of signs».⁵⁷ While it is true that Augustine does present interesting reflections on the nature of signs, on their reference (direct and figurative), and the reality (*res*) to which they refer, it may be doubted that his «interpretation theory frees the reader of biblical texts both from crude literalism and from the dangers of an arbitrary allegorization». Jeanronde maintains that Augustine offers «a semiotic framework in which the biblical text like any other human text is seen to function and in which it therefore needs to be interpreted», and that his theory of interpretation «rules out what we today would call “biblicism”, that is, an attitude of uncritical reverence towards the biblical texts based on the belief in the absolute inerrancy of these works».⁵⁸ There is a serious danger of misunderstanding Augustine, of an anachronistic reading of him, if we read his theoretical considerations as if they were the reflections of a modern writer rather than in the context of his own practice and of his own presuppositions that are stated elsewhere in his voluminous works, even in the same work, *De Doctrina Christiana*.

Although Augustine recommended the study of Hebrew and Greek to Latin speakers in order to understand better many of the words and expressions found in the Latin translations,⁵⁹ he himself knew no Hebrew and understood Greek rather imperfectly. He was well aware of the diversity of readings among the many Latin translations and as a solution recommended comparing them with the Greek Septuagint version, for, on the basis of the legend recounted in the letter of Aristeeas, he regarded the Septuagint as the result of a miraculous divine intervention and thus to be accepted as the authoritative text:

And to correct the Latin we must use the Greek versions, among which the authority of the Septuagint is pre-eminent as far as the Old Testament is concerned; for it is reported through all the more learned churches that the seventy translators enjoyed so much of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in their work of translation, that among that number of men there was but one voice.⁶⁰

57 W.G. JEANRONDE, *Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance*, New York 1991, 22. Jeanronde relies exclusively on Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana* for his analysis.

58 W.G. JEANRONDE, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 23.

59 AUGUSTINE, *Doctr. chr.* II, XI, 16.

60 AUGUSTINE, *Doctr. chr.* II, XV, 22.

The Septuagint was to be preferred even when it diverged from the Hebrew, for the Greek version was the result of a divine intervention on behalf of the nations and part of the divine strategy for reversing the effects of Babel. The signs used to render words visible to the eyes are not common to all peoples because of the sin provoked by the discord among men, whose symbol is the tower of Babel.⁶¹ The first translation into Greek (the language of the nations) is a decisive step in reversing this discord.⁶²

Whatever may be Augustine's theory about the nature of language, his interpretation of Scriptural texts followed in the tradition of «figurative» (to use Augustine's own terminology) exegesis developed so extensively in the Alexandrian tradition and transmitted to the Latin west through Hilary of Poitiers and Ambrose. Moreover, his method of interpretation depended upon an examination of the exactness of the text and the presumption that the details of the text contained clues to a hidden meaning. One example in particular may serve to illustrate this method. In his Commentary on John, referring to the miracle of Cana (John 2:1-11) Augustine states: «When these words of the Gospel are understood, and they are certainly clear, all the mysteries which are latent in this miracle of the Lord will be laid open».⁶³ This text has been used to suggest that Augustine believed in a meaning «beyond the letter» of the text.⁶⁴ Here also there is danger of a misunderstanding. The meaning is not beyond the letter of the text, but is to be found in analyzing the details of the text. The meaning of the word «mystery» for Augustine is not significantly different from that which it had for Origen. It refers to a hidden message encrypted in the text itself. Thus Augustine explains that the six water jars refer to the six ages of the world.⁶⁵ Then he goes on to ask what the phrase «They contained two or three *metretas* apiece» could mean.

61 AUGUSTINE, *Doctr. chr.* II, IV, 5.

62 For a more extensive survey of the development of Augustine's thought on the nature of language, see: A. BORST, *Der Turmbau von Babel. Geschichte der Meinungen über Ursprung und Vielfalt der Sprachen und Völker* 2, Stuttgart 1958, 391-404.

63 AUGUSTINE, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 9,5.

64 I. DE LA POTTERIE, «La lettura della sacra scrittura "nello spirito": il modo patristico di leggere la bibbia è possibile oggi?», *Civiltà cattolica* 3267 (Vol. 137-III- 1986) 209-223, especially 212-213. The author goes on to say that the allegorical method of exegesis is not possible today, but he does not seem to realize that Augustine's statement is directly connected to and presupposes that kind of exegesis. Whether or not it is possible to distill a «spirit of patristic exegesis», distinct from the presuppositions and methods of that exegesis, is highly questionable.

65 AUGUSTINE, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 9,6.

This phrase certainly conveys to us a mysterious meaning. For by «*metretas*» he means certain measures, as if he should say jars, flasks, or something of that sort. *Metreta* is the name of a measure, and takes its name from the word «measure». For μέτρον is the Greek word for measure, whence the word «*metretas*» is derived. «They contained», then, «two or three *metretas* apiece». What are we to say, brethren? If He had simply said «three apiece», our mind would at once have run to the mystery of the Trinity.⁶⁶

Augustine then continues at considerable length to explain how the Trinity is also suggested by the word «two». By modern standards this is hardly avoiding the «dangers of an arbitrary allegorization», but by ancient standards it is perfectly consistent with the presupposition that the text in all its details is inspired and contains mysteries waiting to be deciphered using the various rules of etymology, interpreting the Scriptures by means of the Scriptures, etc. The same presuppositions and attention to the details of the text, but without the use of allegory, can be found in Augustine's interpretation of the story of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar. Arguing against Faustus the Manichaean, who had suggested that Abraham's desire to beget children by Hagar showed that he had no faith in God's promises that he would have children by Sarah, Augustine insists that:

... this promise had not yet been made. Any one who reads the preceding chapters will find that Abraham had already got the promise of the land with a countless number of inhabitants, (Gen 12:2, 7) but that it had not yet been made known to him how the seed spoken of was to be produced, whether by generation from his own body, or from his choice in the adoption of a son, or, in the case of its being from his own body, whether it would be by Sara or another. Whoever examines into this will find that Faustus has made either an imprudent mistake or an impudent misrepresentation.⁶⁷

This certainly goes against the plain and «obvious» sense of the passage in Gen 12:2. Even though it is literally true that the means of the fulfillment of the promise had not yet been specified, the obvious presumption would be that the descendants would be Abraham's natural lineage. Augustine also argues that

66 AUGUSTINE, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 9,7: *quid est ergo: capiebant metretas binas uel ternas? mysterium nobis maxime ista locutio commendat. metretas enim dicit mensuras quasdam, tamquam si diceret urnas, amphoras, uel si quid huiusmodi. nomen mensurae est metreta, et a mensura accepit nomen ista mensura. μέτρον enim mensuram dicunt graeci; inde appellatae metretae. capiebant ergo metretas binas uel ternas. quid dicimus, fratres? si ternas tantum diceret, non curreret animus noster nisi ad mysterium trinitatis.*

67 AUGUSTINE, *Contra Faustum* 22, 32.

even in Gen 15:2-4 when Abraham is informed that his heir will not be his slave but a natural son, God does not tell him who will be the mother. Here again Augustine goes against what might be termed the «narrative logic» of the story by insisting on a narrowly literal reading of details taken out of the context of the whole story.⁶⁸ Clark has characterized Augustine's procedure here («close reading») as a strategy for dealing with difficult passages that offered obstacles to his desired interpretation. It might be better to see it as the result of a more general attitude toward the text, the result of regarding the text as different in character from other texts. It is not a human text but a divine text containing codified messages of all kinds waiting to be deciphered.

The examples offered thus far should serve to show that we are dealing with a very widespread attitude and not with the idiosyncrasy of a particular author. All of the authors examined, whether from the Alexandrian or the Antiochian traditions, manifest this attitude toward the text. It may in fact be the common assumption of the ancient world regarding sacred texts.⁶⁹ In any case, evidence of this assumption can be found within what became the canonical Scriptures. The prophet Jeremiah had predicted a Babylonian captivity of seventy years (25:11; 29:10). In the Book of Daniel this is interpreted to mean 490 years. The author is explicit in his assumption that the text means something else than what is explicitly stated: «I, Daniel, tried to understand in the Scriptures the counting of the years of which the Lord spoke to the prophet Jeremiah» (Dan 9:2). The device for arriving at 490 years instead of 70 is to assume that the original figure referred to weeks of years.⁷⁰

68 See E. A. CLARK, *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity*, Princeton 1999, 120-121, who uses this as an example of what she calls «close reading» of problematic texts.

69 The investigation of this hypothesis lies beyond the scope of this article. However, it may be noted that the enigmatic character of myths and oracles was widely presumed in the ancient Greek world. See F. BUFFIÈRE, *Les mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque*, Paris 1956, 39-44; 48-51. It has also been argued that the practice of the interpretation of Homer as developed in the schools especially during the Hellenistic period is the principal source for the development of ancient biblical interpretation, Jewish and Christian. See F. SIEGERT, *Drei hellenistisch-jüdische Predigten 2. Kommentar nebst Beobachtungen zur hellenistischen Vorgeschichte der Bibelhermeneutik* (WUNT 61), Tübingen 1992, 55-91.

70 This example is analyzed by J.L. KUGEL, *The Bible as it was*, Cambridge, Mass. 1997, 2, 18, as an example to illustrate «the assumption that all ancient interpreters seem to share is that the Bible is a fundamentally cryptic document». Kugel argues that the roots of the assumption go back to the Bible itself. For additional material on esoteric exegesis within the text tradition of the Old Testament, see especially M. FISHBANE, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, Oxford 1986, 443-446; 506-511.

Another, perhaps more notorious example from the New Testament may serve to illustrate this attitude or assumption further. In Gal 3:16 Paul states: «Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his seed. It does not say, “And to seeds”, referring to many; but, referring to one, “And to your seed”, which is Christ». Whether one considers the use of the singular «seed» (σπέρμα) in Gen 12:3 to be a case of synecdoche or a collective or generic noun, the original and obvious meaning is clearly plural: «descendants». Paul’s procedure would hardly be acceptable in terms of ancient rhetorical analysis. It «becomes possible due to the prophetic nature of Scripture in the eyes of Paul (and presumably his audience)». ⁷¹ But the «prophetic nature of Scripture» is based on the assumption that the original text need not mean what it actually says because it is an encrypted communication. There seems little doubt that Paul is deliberately trying to exclude the traditional interpretation of Gen 13:15 (also 17:8; 22:18; 24:7). ⁷²

b. The nature of language

Etymology

The examples cited thus far illustrate a particular attitude toward and assumptions about the nature of the biblical text. Other ancient exegetical procedures are based on certain assumptions about the nature of language itself. Not only the text but individual words, and especially names, in their original (etymological) sense offered clues to the real or hidden meaning of the text, which it was the task of the exegete to uncover. ⁷³ Although a certain interest in etymology

71 R.D. ANDERSON, JR., *Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul*, Leuven ²1998, 170.

72 Hays (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 85) describes this as: «Another notorious instance of christocentric exegesis» and explains that «This exegesis is less perverse than it might appear, depending as it surely does on the linkage of the catchword seed to God’s promise to David in 2 Sam 7:12-14». This would hardly make it less notorious or perverse for the reader unconvinced of christocentric exegesis. The «christocentric» hermeneutic explains the source of Paul’s interpretation, but not the assumption about the nature of the text that makes the interpretation possible. For additional treatment of this text see H.D. BETZ, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia), Philadelphia 1979, 157, and R. LONGENECKER, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, Grand Rapids, Mich. ²1999, 106-107.

73 The development and transmission of the biblical etymologies in a great variety of ancient languages has been amply studied by F. WUTZ, *Onomastica sacra. Untersuchungen zum Liber interpretationis nominum hebraicorum des hl. Hieronymus, I-II*, (TU 3, 11), Leipzig 1914-1915. See also A. VON HARNACK, *Der kirchengeschichtliche Ertrag der exegetischen*

may be detected already in some of the Old Testament accounts of origins, e.g., Gen 11:5-9, Jewish authors were certainly influenced by the use of this procedure in the Hellenistic world, particularly in the interpretation of the Homeric epics.⁷⁴ Stoic authors employed this technique and sought to give it philosophical and linguistic justification. Etymology and allegorical interpretation tended to go hand in hand.⁷⁵ Philo seems to have been the first to develop systematically the Old Testament etymologies but he had predecessors.⁷⁶ The theoretical basis for the practice included certain presuppositions about the nature of language that Philo justified in an interpretation of Gen 2:19 where Adam is given the task of naming all other creatures:

For the native reasoning power in the soul being still unalloyed, and no infirmity or disease or evil affection having intruded itself, he received the impressions made by bodies and objects in their sheer reality, and the titles he gave were fully apposite, for right well did he divine the character of the creatures he was describing, with the result that their natures were apprehended as soon as their names were uttered.⁷⁷

Through the fall, the expulsion from the garden, and the confusion of languages at Babel, this immediate access to reality through language had been obscured, but through diligent investigation of the etymology of names, some of it could be recaptured. Christian authors, above all Origen, used the work of Philo and added to the tradition material for the New Testament names.⁷⁸ By the third century AD

Arbeiten des Origenes 1. Hexateuch und Richterbuch (TU 42, 3), Leipzig 1918, 52-57. Harnack groups the use of etymologies together with number symbolism and «anderer Aberglaube».

74 See F. BUFFIÈRE, *Les mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque*, Paris 1956, 60-65.

75 See especially the recent work by D. DAWSON, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria*, Berkeley 1992, 31. Dawson points out «In general, it seems that etymology was part of the Stoic theory of nominal meaning. Nominal meaning was a physical relationship between single names (*nomina*) and the objects they represented. In a process of primordial naming or dubbing by wise nomenclators, the "essence" or "content" of an object became the "meaning" of the word used to name it».

76 See L.L. GRABBE, *Etymology in Early Jewish Interpretation. The Hebrew Names in Philo*, Ithaca, N.Y. 1988.

77 *Opif.* 150. English translation: *Philo* 1, ed. F.H. Colson - G.H. Whitaker (LCL 226), Cambridge, Mass. 1929, 119.

78 For the complex development up to the time of Jerome, see WUTZ, *Onomastica sacra*, 13-51 and R.P.C. HANSON, «Interpretations of Hebrew Names in Origen», *Vigiliae Christianae* 10 (1956) 103-123. Jerome, in the preface to his own work on the Hebrew names, seems to regard Origen as the author of the New Testament material. See *Liber interpre-*

alphabetical lists of names with these etymologies probably existed as well as lists that followed the order of the biblical books. Most authors under Alexandrian influence made use of the etymologies to generate allegorical or spiritual interpretations of the text. Jerome and Augustine must be included in this tradition.⁷⁹ The particular etymological interpretations thus generated often had a long career.

One example may suffice to illustrate this procedure. By means of an etymology of the name Jacob based on Gen 27:36, Philo identified Jacob as «the one who strikes at the heel»,⁸⁰ which he interpreted to mean the one who engages in spiritual combat against the vices. Jacob is thus identified as the ascetic (ὁ ἀσκητής) or as the ascetic soul or as «the mind in training» (ὁ νοῦς ὁ ἀσκητής).⁸¹ For Philo a change of name in the Scriptures is particularly significant. When Jacob's name is changed in Gen 32, Philo interprets the new name «Israel» to mean «the one who sees God». Jacob-Israel then becomes the symbolic representation of the two aspects of the spiritual life, the active or «practical life» and the contemplative life.⁸² Numerous later writers including Origen, Eusebius, Didymus, Ambrose, Cyril of Alexandria, and John Cassian will use this complex etymological interpretation.⁸³

Interpreting Scripture by means of Scripture

The phrase «spiritual things with spiritual things» denotes a hermeneutical procedure that permeates the exegetical work of Origen as well as that of many other ancient exegetes. In his homily on the ark in Genesis, Origen remarks toward the end: «To be sure, if someone can, at leisure, bring together Scripture with Scripture, and compare divine Scripture and fit together “spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Cor 2:13) we are not unmindful that he will discover in this passage many secrets of a profound and hidden mystery...».⁸⁴ For the patristic

tationis hebraicorum nominum, ed. P. Antin (CCL 72), Turnhout 1959, 59. Wutz argues against the authorship of a New Testament Onomasticon by Origen (pp. 38, 42) and attributes it rather to an unknown Alexandrian scholar working in the years 260-270 (p. 36).

79 See SIMONETTI, *Lettera e/o Allegoria*, 330, 350.

80 *Mut.* 81.

81 *Mut.* 84-85 and *Leg.* III,18.

82 *Fug.* 36-37.

83 For a more detailed explanation of this etymological interpretation and its history, see M. SHERIDAN, «Jacob and Israel. A Contribution to the History of an Interpretation» in this volume, 315-334.

84 ORIGEN, *HomGn* 2,6.

exegete it is axiomatic that one should seek the explanation of a term, or a figure in other texts where the same word is used. To the modern interpreter, conditioned as he is to literary genres and different historical contexts, it seems almost capricious to explain a passage in one book by means of a passage having only a slight verbal similarity from another book of a different literary genre written in a different epoch. To the patristic exegete (or at least the Alexandrian exegete), such a procedure was necessary and absolutely consistent with the basic premise of the unified authorship of Scripture.

Origen invokes this procedure explaining how to discover the meaning of passages that, taken literally, are impossible:

Accordingly he who reads in an exact manner must, in obedience to the Savior's precept which says, «Search the scriptures», carefully investigate how far the literal meaning is true and how far it is impossible, and to the utmost of his power must trace out from the use of similar expressions the meaning scattered everywhere through the scriptures of that which when taken literally is impossible.⁸⁵

Elsewhere Origen relates a simile that he heard from a rabbi in which the Scriptures are compared to a house with a large number of locked rooms. Each room has a key but the keys have been mixed up and dispersed throughout the house. The key then to one passage of Scripture is to be found in other passages. We are able to understand obscure passages of Scripture when we take as a point of departure a similar passage from another portion of Scripture, because «the principle of interpretation has been dispersed among them».⁸⁶ Origen puts this principle into practice in his commentary on the Canticle where, in order to explain Cant 2:9, in which the beloved is compared to a gazelle or young stag, he assembles all references to these animals in other books of Scripture.⁸⁷

This procedure of explaining Scripture by Scripture is based on the fundamental premise that the Holy Spirit is the true author of the whole Bible.⁸⁸ In fact, from a formal point of view, the principle is the same as explaining Homer

85 *PArch* 4, 3, 5. The translation is by G.W. Butterworth in ORIGEN, *On First Principles*, New York 1966, 296. See the commentary on this passage by Crouzel in ORIGÈNE, *Traité des principes IV* (Livres III et IV): *Commentaire et Fragments* (Sch 269), ed. H. Crouzel - M. Simonetti, Paris 1980, 203-204.

86 *Philoc* 2,3. For the most recent edition of this text, see ORIGÈNE, *Philocalie*, ed. M. Harl - N. de Lange (Sch 302), Paris 1983, 243-244.

87 ORIGEN, *ComCt* 3.

88 This is stated quite explicitly in *HomEz* 1,4 where Origen says that everything that has been written are words of the same God.

by Homer, a traditional principle of Alexandrian philology, which had been applied to other classical authors such as Plato and Hippocrates.⁸⁹ A similar if not identical procedure can be found already in the New Testament in the writings of Paul. In Rom 4:18 he brings together Gen 15:6 and Ps 32:12 because of the hook word «reckon».⁹⁰ This exegetical principle was known later in rabbinic literature as *gezera shava*.

However, in justifying his constant use of this procedure, Origen does not appeal so much to the example of Paul as to the principle itself which he finds stated in 1 Cor 2:13 («comparing spiritual things to spiritual»)⁹¹ Origen seems in fact to be the first to interpret this phrase as an exegetical principle.⁹² Prior to Origen the verse is found cited only by Clement of Alexandria and in two other works.⁹³ Clement seems to have interpreted the word «spiritual» as a masculine noun and understood it to mean «spiritual men», that is, initiates, to whom the «spiritual things» could be given. Origen interprets both nouns instead as neuter and equivalent in meaning to «words of scripture».

Although modern exegetes have tended to read the phrase more in the sense of Clement than in that of Origen, the Jewish schools related texts on the basis of verbal similarities, beginning with the school of Hillel at the end of the first century.⁹⁴ Origen could hardly have been ignorant of the fact that this method was employed in the Jewish and pagan schools, but he consistently appeals to Paul as his authority for the method. Thus, for Origen, Paul provided the rule and the example that bound the ancient Scriptures inextricably to the new rev-

89 According to Porphyry, the principle originates with to Aristarchus of Samothrace. Similar formulations can be found in the writings of Proclus with reference to explaining Plato and in the writings of Galen with reference to Hippocrates. See J. PÉPIN, *La Tradition de L'Allegorie de Philon d'Alexandrie a Dante. Études Historiques*, Paris 1987, 194-197.

90 See R.B. HAYS, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, New Haven 1989, 13, 55, 85. C.K. STOCKHAUSEN, *Moses' Veil and the Glory of the New Covenant* (Analecta Biblica 116), Roma 1989, 2627, 5659 finds extensive use of this procedure in 2 Cor 3:16.

91 The passages in which Origen appeals to this text are numerous. Among them may be mentioned *HomGn* 2,6; 6,3; 7,4; *HomEx* 1,2; *HomNum* 16,9; *HomEz* 1,2; 1,4; 6,4; *ComCt* 3; *ComJn* 13,361; *CCels* 4,71; 7,11.

92 COCCHINI, *Il Paolo di Origene*, 119.

93 The *Elenchos*, attributed to a Roman author at the beginning of the second century and the *Commentary on Daniel*, attributed to an oriental author at the end of the second century or the beginning of the third. See COCCHINI, *Il Paolo di Origene*, 119.

94 S. LIEBERMAN, «Rabbinic Interpretation of Scripture», in *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine (Studies in the Literary Transmission, Beliefs and Manners of Palestine in the I Century B.C.E. - IV Century C.E.)*, New York ²1962, 60, n. 104.

elation. Indeed, Origen often understands the phrase «spiritual things with spiritual things» to mean precisely the comparison of passages of the Old and New Testaments respectively.⁹⁵

In keeping with the context of 1 Cor 2:13, Origen also insists that only one who is «spiritual» or «perfect» is capable of comparing «spiritual things with spiritual things».⁹⁶ The person who is still spiritually a «child» (1 Cor 3:1-2), who is nourished «with milk» and «is unskillful in the word of justice» nor is he able to receive the «solid food» of the divine wisdom and knowledge of the law (cf. Heb 5:13-14), cannot «compare spiritual things with spiritual». Those, on the other hand, who do not follow «the letter which kills» but the «spirit which quickens», receive the spirit of adoption which allows them to penetrate beneath the letter of the law. Applying this same rule further to the story of Hagar and Ishmael, Origen dwells on the fact that Ishmael was given a bottle of water in contrast to a well of living water (Gen 21:14). Bringing together the texts of Gen 21:14; 26:14-17; Gal 4:28 and Prov 5:15-16 on this basis, Origen concludes:

The bottle of the Law is the letter, from which that carnal people drinks, and thence receives understanding. This letter frequently fails them. It cannot extricate itself; for the historical understanding is defective in many things. But the Church drinks from the evangelic and apostolic fountains which never fail, but «run in its streets» (Prov 5:16), because they always abound and flow in the breadth of spiritual interpretation. The Church drinks also «from wells» when it draws and examines certain deeper things from the Law.⁹⁷

Origen also combined this method indicated by the phrase «comparing spiritual things with spiritual things» with the use of etymologies. An etymology employed in one place to explain a text can be used wherever the same name occurs to introduce the same meaning into the text, even though the texts themselves may be unrelated. Thus Origen interprets Gen 45:27-28, in which both the names Jacob and Israel occur, in such a way that the name Israel represents spiritual intelligence, «he who sees in his mind the true life which is Christ,

95 See for example *HomEx* 1,2: «Anyone, therefore, can perhaps, “by comparing spiritual things with spiritual things” and putting old things together with new and new with old, perceive the mystery of Egypt and the descent of the patriarchs into it, if he can investigate those words spiritually and follow the thought of the Apostle...».

96 *HomGn* 7,4.

97 *HomGn* 7,5.

the true God».⁹⁸ He also says that the two names, Jacob and Israel, can be interpreted this way wherever they occur in Scripture and gives a long list of such occurrences.⁹⁹

CONCLUSIONS

By now it should be obvious that the answer to the question contained in the title of this essay is: neither. For those who understand the presuppositions and rules of early Christian exegesis, the latter should neither be a cause for embarrassment nor can it offer a program for the future. It need not be a cause for embarrassment if we are aware of the difference of historical perspective that separates us from the ancient world. The practice of early Christian as well as Jewish exegesis depended on having a completely a-historical (from our point of view of course) view of the nature of language and literature. We now know that Hebrew was not the original language of the human race (as Jerome did not)¹⁰⁰ but rather a relatively late development in the West Semitic family of languages. We know this because of the painstaking comparative study of Semitic languages over the past two centuries and because of the discovery and decipherment of long forgotten languages, including Akkadian and Ugaritic, to mention just a few. We also know much more about the history of writing itself, the development of different methods, pictographic, syllabic and finally the alphabetic form developed at Ugarit and passed on to those who wrote Hebrew. Because of the comparative study of the literatures in these other languages, we now know that many texts in the Hebrew Scriptures have a literary pre-history, particularly those relating to myths of origins, wisdom literature and forms of poetry. We know much more about the process of literary composition and interpretation that went on in antiquity. We are interested in and aware of the historical process by which the texts came into being. This knowledge results in demythologizing the ancient texts and makes it impossible to regard them as encrypted documents.

98 *HomGn* 15,3. This meaning is of course based on the story in Gen 32:28-30. Philo had already interpreted the name Israel to mean «he who sees God». See *Somn.* I, 171; *Praem.* 36.

99 *HomGn* 15,4.

100 JEROME, *Commentarii in prophetas minores* (CSEL 76A), In *Sophoniam*, cap. 3, linea: 538: *id quod diximus nugae, sciamus in hebraeo ipsum latinum esse sermonem, et propterea a nobis ita ut in hebraeo erat positum, ut nosse possimus linguam hebraicam omnium linguarum esse matricem, quod non est huius temporis disserere.* See also BORST, *Der Turmbau von Babel*, 385-391.

This additional knowledge does not mean that we are more intelligent than people in the ancient world. The extraordinary grammatical, rhetorical and philosophical analyses of language alone that we have inherited from the ancient world should warn us against such a conclusion. What is different is that we have at our disposition an enormous amount of data about language and literature that was simply not available in antiquity. The analysis of this data allows us to arrive at a very different historical perspective.

One of the most notable results of this perspective is the very different approach to the concept of the «human author» of the various biblical books. In antiquity the interest in the human authors was negligible because the human author served as a scribe. The real author was thought to be God or the Logos or the Holy Spirit. The emphasis that we find in recent church documents such as the constitution of the Second Vatican Council «*Dei Verbum*» and the document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission cited earlier on the human author and the necessity of studying the human process of composition with due attention to literary forms, etc. would have baffled ancient commentators.¹⁰¹ They were simply unaware of the long historical process that makes such study imperative. Their reading of texts was in a literal sense not so much «anachronistic» as «achronistic». They did not seek first of all to locate a text in its historical setting because they were relatively unaware that the historical setting could be determinative for understanding the meaning of the text.

Increased historical knowledge has thus led to increased emphasis on the human authorship of Scripture as an essential element in understanding its meaning. This in turn has led to the development of more complicated theories of «inspiration» in order to account for the concepts of «divine author» and «human author» and to explain their relationship with regard to the concept of «intention of the author». Exploring this development lies outside the scope of this essay, but it is interesting to note that the increase in production of treatises on «inspiration» is concomitant with the development of historical criticism.¹⁰²

101 See, for example, the dogmatic constitution of Vatican II, *Dei Verbum* 12: «However, since God speaks in sacred Scripture through men in human fashion, the interpreter of Sacred Scripture, in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us, should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words».

102 See the article R. COLLINS «Inspiration», in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. R.E. Brown - J.A. Fitzmyer - R.E. Murphy; Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1990, 1023-1033, esp. p. 1028.

As was noted at the beginning of this article, one of the complaints against modern historical criticism is that it makes the Scriptures remote and difficult of access to the ordinary reader (who is not a fundamentalist). Presumably access was easier in antiquity. This is an illusion. Anyone who has studied in detail the methods of ancient Jewish and Christian exegesis is aware how complicated an affair it really was. The role of the interpreter of Scripture in antiquity was no less that of an expert than in the modern world. It required specialized training and conferred status in the community. Indeed, the status of the interpreter in the ancient world was greater than that accorded him in the modern world, for he was the mediator of secret or hidden wisdom.¹⁰³ What is really different is that we do not share the common presupposition of the early Christian period that the whole text must have an immediate usefulness for us.¹⁰⁴ Discovering that «usefulness» was always the work of experts and often a tortuous process.

This study has been limited to the question of how suppositions about the nature of the text and about language affected interpretation in the ancient world. Other presuppositions and procedures, such as the criteria of «fittingness for God» and «usefulness», have been touched on only in passing.¹⁰⁵ The question of ancient versus modern interpretation is not primarily one of differing rules and methods but of ancient presuppositions rendered untenable by advancing historical knowledge. In this sense the portrayal of the history of exegesis as a long struggle for the literal sense is mistaken. It is rather a question of increased appreciation of the very human and historical process through which the texts came into being. Contemporary difficulties in reading the Scriptures as they were read in the past are caused fundamentally not by a lack of faith, as is sometimes suggested, but by an enormous increase in historical knowledge and a greatly expanded historical perspective.

The situation is similar to that in another but very different field, architecture. Greek temples and Gothic cathedrals are expressions of very special moments in history and are intimately related to the cultural settings in which they were originally constructed. Both were, to use a very modern phrase, products of the cutting edge of the technology of their day as well as expressions of rich religious and literary contexts. Many attempts have been made to imitate them

103 On the development of the role of interpreter, see KUGEL, *The Bible as it Was*, 10-17. One may note in passing that all writings that enjoy authority in a society from a legal or moral point of view confer authority on their interpreters.

104 See notes 22 and 50 above.

105 See notes 22 and 22.

and architects, who understand the principles on which they were constructed, can produce reasonable facsimiles. But does it make sense to do so? The modern copies remain monuments to past genius. They are not rooted in their own epoch. So it is also with ancient biblical interpretation. Those who understand the procedures and the rules used by the ancient interpreters can reproduce that kind of interpretation. But it will be unconvincing because we do not share the premises on which it was based. We can appreciate the inner coherence of the world of ancient exegesis and we can admire the skill of the ancient interpreters, but we cannot live in that world any more than we can live in the world of ancient Athens or medieval Paris. We do not share the *forma mentis*, the mental world of these past epochs. That world has been irreversibly expanded.

The question of how this vast heritage of early Christian interpretation should or can be used in theological reflection or in the life of the church lies outside the scope of this article. Any attempt to address this question must start by recognizing the gap that separates our mental world from that of early Christianity. Different concepts of «Scripture» and of «inspiration» have been operative in different periods and Scripture has played different roles in theology and in the life of the church in different epochs.¹⁰⁶

106 This article is cited in a significant essay by A. MONTANARI, «“Iuxta propria principia” Appunti per lo studio dell’ermeneutica biblica antica», *Teologia* 2 (2004) 127-151. Although I agree with many of the observations of Montanari, especially with the notion of Christ as the interpretive key for all the Scriptures, certain affirmations require further nuancing. For example, the statement that allegorical exegesis rests on the conviction that the Old Testament is oriented toward the mystery of Christ (p. 133) is true for certain types of allegorical exegesis, especially regarding the contents of the interpretation, but it is not true of all types of early Christian exegesis. See also the essay «The Bible as Read by the Fathers» in this volume, 277-291.

THE INFLUENCE OF ORIGEN ON COPTIC EXEGESIS IN THE SIXTH CENTURY. THE CASE OF RUFUS OF SHOTEP¹

INTRODUCTION: MAKING THE CAMEL PASS THROUGH THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE

Toward the end of the sixth century in a small town in Upper Egypt named Shotep, a Coptic bishop by the name of Rufus preached a series of homilies on the Gospel of Matthew. Having arrived at the statement that «John wore clothing made of camel's hair» (Matt 3:4), Rufus concluded his explanation as follows:

John's garment is (made) out of camel's hair. The camel does not split the hoof but it does ruminate (cf. Lev 11:3 7). The law is spiritual but it does not split the hoof, since those who adhere to it adhere to it without discernment. It is about the teaching of these old writings that the expression (i.e., «camel's hair») is informing us this (the teaching) from which those ancients were taught, from a writing without discernment, since it is like an unshaped and absurd animal compared to them, that is, the camel. As for this, since it does not split the hoof, so as not to make good sense out of the difficult text, it is this, the thickness of which was made thin, the size of which was reduced, so as to make it pass through the eye of a needle (cf. Matt 19:24). The new Word, having made worship of this carnal sort, circumcision, times, festivals, the temple, and the worldly altar with its furnishings to come to naught, all these things, he reduced through the spirit to make them enter through the discernment of allegory.²

This explanation caused the cataloguer of these manuscripts to exclaim, «strange allegories, incoherent terms»³. Yet, from the point of view of the his-

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- 1 Originally published in *Origeniana Octava. Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition. Papers of the 8th International Origen Congress, Pisa 27-31 August 2001*, Leuven 2003, 1023-1033.
 - 2 J.M. SHERIDAN, *Rufus of Shotep. Homilies on the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, Roma 1998, 138-140.
 - 3 M.E. PORCHER, «Analyse des manuscrits coptes 131.1 8 de la Bibliothèque Nationale avec indication des textes bibliques», *Revue d'Égyptologie* 2 (1936) 116.

tory of exegesis, the interpretation is neither strange nor incoherent but follows well established rules with a long and venerable history. Here I shall seek to elucidate two of these rules, that of interpreting Scripture by Scripture and that of the missing literal sense signaling the need for allegorical interpretation, and to show how Rufus used them to construct his interpretation.

INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE BY MEANS OF SCRIPTURE

Rufus' basic premise, which is not stated in this passage, is that John the Baptist represents the Old Testament Scriptures.⁴ In the broader context of the passage Rufus draws a contrast between John's garment of camel's hair and the garment of lamb's wool worn by Jesus referred to in John 19:23. John the Baptist is made to say that he is wearing a camel's hair garment because the lamb has not yet grown wool so that a lamb's wool garment could be produced. Implicit here is the symbolism of Christ as the lamb of God. Since Rufus realizes that this reference is obscure, his imaginary hearer is made to object and demand a clearer explanation.

The answer is that the camel does not split the hoof but does ruminate. This reference to Lev 11:3-7 in which it is stated that, «the camel, because it ruminates but does not split the hoof, is unclean to you», brings us to the first rule to be elucidated. In the Alexandrian exegetical tradition it is axiomatic that one should seek the explanation of a term, or a figure in other texts where the same word is used. To the modern interpreter, conditioned as he is to literary genres and different historical contexts, it seems almost capricious to explain a passage in one book by means of a passage having only a slight verbal similarity from another book of a different literary genre written in a different epoch. To the Alexandrian exegete, such a procedure was necessary and absolutely consistent with the basic premise of the unified divine authorship of Scripture.

Origen invokes this procedure in the context of explaining how to discover the meaning of passages that, taken literally, are impossible:

Accordingly he who reads in an exact manner must, in obedience to the Saviour's precept which says, «Search the scriptures», carefully investigate how far the literal meaning is true and how far it is impossible, and to the utmost of his power must trace out from the use of similar expressions the meaning

⁴ On the role of John the Baptist as symbol of the Old Testament in the thought of Origen, see H. CROUZEL, *Origène et la "Connaissance mystique"* (Museum Lessianum section théologique 56), Paris 1961, 296-300. See Origen, *HomLev* 13,2.

scattered everywhere through the scriptures of that which when taken literally is impossible.⁵

Elsewhere Origen relates a simile that he heard from a rabbi in which the Scriptures are compared to a house with a large number of locked rooms. Each room has a key but the keys have been mixed up and dispersed throughout the house. The key then to one passage of Scripture is to be found in other passages. We are able to understand obscure passages of Scripture when we take as a point of departure a similar passage from another portion of Scripture, because «the principle of interpretation (τὸ ἐξηγητικόν) has been dispersed among them».⁶ Origen puts this principle into practice in his commentary on the Canticle where, in order to explain Cant 2:9, in which the beloved is compared to a gazelle or young stag, he assembles all that is said about these animals in other books of Scripture.⁷

This procedure of explaining Scripture by Scripture is based on the fundamental premise that the Holy Spirit is the true author of the whole Bible. In fact, from a formal point of view, the principle is the same as explaining Homer by Homer, a traditional principle of Alexandrian philology, which, according to Porphyry, goes back to Aristarchus of Samothrace. Similar formulations can be found in the writings of Proclus with reference to explaining Plato and in the writings of Galen with reference to Hippocrates.⁸

A similar if not identical procedure can be found already in the New Testament in the writings of Paul. In Gal 3:16 Paul constructs an exegetical chain using the word for «seed» found in Gen 13:15 (17:8; 22:18; 24:7) and 2 Sam 7:12 14 (τὸ σπέρμα). In Rom 4:1 8 he brings together Gen 15:6 and Ps 32:1 2 because of the hook word «reckon» (λογίζομαι).⁹ This exegetical principle was known later in Rabbinic literature as *gezera shava*.

5 *PArch* 4, 3, 5. The translations of this work are by G.W. Butterworth in ORIGEN, *On First Principles*, New York 1966. See the commentary on this passage by Crouzel in ORIGÈNE, *Traité des principes IV* (Livres III et IV): *Commentaire et Fragments* (Sch 269), ed. H. Crouzel - M. Simonetti, Paris 1980, 203-204.

6 *Philoc* 2,3. For the most recent edition of this text, see ORIGÈNE, *Philocalie*, ed. M. Harl - N. de Lange (Sch 302), Paris 1983, 244-243.

7 See *ComCt* 3.

8 See J. PÉPIN, *La Tradition de L'Allegorie de Philon d'Alexandrie a Dante. Études Historiques*, Paris 1987, 194-197.

9 See R.B. HAYS, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, New Haven 1989, 13, 55, 85. C.K. STOCKHAUSEN, *Moses' Veil and the Glory of the New Covenant* (Analecta Biblica 116), Roma 1989, 26, 27, 56, 59, finds extensive use of this procedure in 2 Cor 3:1-6.

HISTORY OF THE INTERPRETATION OF LEV 11:3-7

What does Rufus gain by invoking Lev 11:3-7? The answer lies in the long exegetical history of that passage. Philo of Alexandria had already introduced an allegorical interpretation of the camel on a psychological and moral level.¹⁰ A first Christian allegorical interpretation of Lev 11:3ff. is found already in Irenaeus, who interprets the clean animals that ruminate and split the hoof as a symbol for the Christians who have faith in the Father and the Son (a cloven hoof) and meditate on the word of God night and day (they ruminate). Among the unclean animals, those that ruminate but do not have a cloven hoof are a symbol for the Jews who meditate on Scripture but have faith only in the Father. The animals that do not ruminate but have a cloven hoof represent the heretics.¹¹ Origen also develops an allegorical interpretation of this text in which «to ruminate» means to recall, in the spiritual sense, the things that one reads on the literal level and to rise from lower and visible things to those invisible and higher. Origen¹² explicitly mentions the camel as a symbol for those who

10 PHILO, *Agr.* 30 (131-132): «And yet, if we fix our eyes on the literal way of regarding the matter, I do not know what principle there is in the reason given for the camel's uncleanness; but, if we look to the way suggested by latent meanings there is a most vital principle. For as the animal that chews the cud renders digestible the food taken in before it rises again to the surface, so the soul of the keen learner, when it has by listening taken in this and that proposition, does not hand them over to forgetfulness, but in stillness all alone goes over them one by one quite quietly...». Eng. tr.: *Philo* 3, ed. F.H. Colson - G.H. Whitaker (LCL 247), Cambridge, Mass. 1930, 175. Before him, Ps. Aristeas had also introduced moral allegory into the interpretation of the passage but without explicit mention of the camel: «... All the rules which he has laid down with what is permitted in the case of these birds and other animals, he has enacted with the object of teaching us a moral lesson. For the division of the hoof and the separation of the claws are intended to teach us that we must discriminate between our individual actions with a view to the practice of virtue». «*The Letter of Aristeas*» §150-151, in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament I*, ed. R.H. Charles, Oxford 1913, 108.

11 IRENAEUS, *Adv. Haer.* 5,8,3. See M. SIMONETTI, *Lettera e/o Allegoria. Un contributo alla storia dell'esgesi patristica*, Roma 1985, 41.

12 *si non ista competenti ratione discernas et divides, camelus es tortuosus; qui cum intellectum acceperis ex meditatione legis divinae, non divides neque segregas praesentia et futura nec angustam viam a via spatiosa secernis.* (*HomLev* 7,6). *Origenes Werke*, VI Band, I. Teil, *Die Homilien zu Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus*, ed. W.A. Baehrens (GCS 29), Leipzig 1920, 389. Cyril of Alexandria interprets the different types of animals to represent different types of persons with whom one may associate or not according to their moral qualities (PG 76, 988b. See also 988c 989c and PG 68, 916a 936c). See A. KERRIGAN, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria, Interpreter of the Old Testament* (Analecta Biblica 2), Roma 1952, 154-155. Hesychius of Jerusalem, a contemporary of Cyril, interprets the clean animals that

meditate but do not divide and separate present from future things and do not distinguish the narrow way from the broad one.¹³

In this tradition of allegorical interpretation, Rufus seems to be close to Origen. The camel represents for Rufus the law which is spiritual but «does not split the hoof so that those who adhere to it may adhere to it without discernment». The law is like the camel, which Rufus has described as an unshapely and «absurd» (or «senseless») animal. The conclusion one must draw is that the law does not contain its own explanation or interpretation. Not splitting the hoof, Rufus explains, means not applying reason to the difficult passage, that is, not supplying an allegorical interpretation of it, as becomes clear from the end of the passage under consideration. However, «the difficult passage» has now become in effect the entire Old Testament, «these old writings».¹⁴

THE ABSURDITY OF THE CAMEL

Although most might agree with Rufus that the camel is an unshapely beast, his description of it as «absurd» or «senseless» (ἄλογον) is at first puzzling. The puzzle is resolved when we realize that the description of the camel as ἄλογον is not a casual bit of ridicule aimed at the camel but that the word is a technical term traditionally applied to certain portions of Scripture, and is here being applied to the entire Old Testament. The word has a precise meaning in the history of exegesis and brings us to the second major rule being invoked implicitly by Rufus, the idea that on the literal level a passage may lack meaning.

In the fourth book of the *Peri Archon* (4,2,9), Origen raises the question of how one can know whether a passage of Scripture has a literal sense as well as a spiritual one. His answer is that unlikely things, which cause difficulty or scandal because they are unworthy of God, have sometimes been inserted in the law or in the histories. This difficulty is a sign that they are to be interpreted spiritu-

ruminate and split the hoof to symbolize those who meditate and put into practice the divine law and know how to distinguish the letter from the spirit (PG 93, 903d).

13 It is conceivable that Rufus is following Origen's interpretation of this passage (Matt 3:4). This portion of Origen's commentary on Matthew has not been preserved. The other principal commentary on Matthew of the Alexandrian school, that of Didymus, has also not survived.

14 This interpretation becomes even more explicit in the passage that follows where he says: «As for those prophecies of the prophets, the worship of the law, the ancient histories, they ceased being written and they became spirit» (cf. 2 Cor 3:6). See SHERIDAN, *Rufus of Shotep*, 140.

ally rather than literally. The same principle holds true for the interpretation of the gospels and the letters of the Apostle, which, he says, do not always present a simple account of the facts on the literal level (κατὰ τὸ σωματικόν). Neither these nor the legislation and the precepts of the Old Testament always manifest reasonableness (τὸ εὐλογον), an expression that is the opposite of ἄλογον (absurd or senseless).

Origen then offers examples of this principle. First he cites what appear to be historical accounts that lack verisimilitude such as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and a mountain sufficiently high that from its summit one could see all the kingdoms of the world (Matt 4:8).¹⁵ Then he says that in the Mosaic legislation as well there are some things that are absurd (τὸ ἄλογον) and others that are impossible (τὸ ἀδύνατον).¹⁶ Among those that are absurd, he cites the command not to eat griffons (Lev 11:13), since they do not exist. After giving numerous such examples, Origen is careful to avoid giving the impression that no legislation is to be observed literally simply because some accounts are absurd (ἐπεὶ τις κατὰ τὴν λέξιν ἄλογος).¹⁷ The basic assumption is that all Scripture has a spiritual sense. Much of it has a literal as well as a spiritual meaning.¹⁸ The presupposition is of course that all Scripture is the Word of God, that it is directed to us here and now,¹⁹ and that God would not give us something that has no meaning. If the text does not have a literal meaning, it must have a spiritual one.

15 *PArch* 4, 3, 1.

16 *PArch* 4, 3, 2.

17 *PArch* 4, 3, 4.

18 For further discussion of this exegetical principle (τὸ ἄλογον), see Pépin, *La Tradition de L'Allegorie*, 167-176. To understand this principle, it is important to keep in mind that for the ancient exegete, a metaphor does not have a literal sense. Taken literally the metaphor becomes absurd and a classic definition of allegory (see n. 34 below) is «extended metaphor». For the ancient exegete, «literal sense» is not the same as «intent of the author» as it tends to be for modern ones.

19 The notion of the actuality of the Scriptures can be found already in Deuteronomy, in the insistent phrase «which I enjoin on you today» (e.g. Deut 4:40) and in the statement: «not with our fathers did he make this covenant, but with us, all of us who are alive here today» (Deut 5:3). See also 2 Tim 3:15-17. Hays (*Echoes of Scripture*, 167) calls this «the master hermeneutical trope that governs all the textual interplay of Paul's letters, citing as examples 1 Cor 9:14; Rom 4:23-24; 1 Cor 10:11; Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 5:13; Gal 4:30 and Rom 10:5-10 (a non taxative list). He seems to regard this as a trope distinct from allegorizing, which he tends to minimize in Paul. However, the notion of the actuality of the Scriptures seems not to be a trope at all but rather the presupposition for allegorizing. Indeed, the idea of the actuality of Scripture is virtually a corollary of the notion of Scripture itself and the result of the canonization of the texts in the society.

Tò ἄλογον (absurdity or meaninglessness) is a key to recognizing when the text is not to be taken literally. It belongs to the more general principle known in the later Latin tradition as *defectus litterae* (missing literal sense).²⁰

In the *De Principiis* Origen limits his application of the term ἄλογον to specific passages of Scripture, but elsewhere he applies it more generally to the Old Testament. When Zachary emerges from offering incense in the temple, he can communicate only by signs and remains mute until the birth of John (Luke 1:20-22). Origen explains that the silence of Zachary is the silence of the prophets among the people of Israel. Zachary is «the image of that which is carried out among them up to our days».²¹ Their institutions are «*sine ratione atque sermone*». They are unable to give an account of their gestures (*rationem reddere*).²² Origen then asserts that their circumcision is a gesture without meaning. Likewise their Passover and other feasts are simply gestures rather than truth. Up to this day the people of Israel are deaf and dumb because they have rejected the Word. They are like Moses in Egypt (Exod 4:10), who said to the Lord, «ego autem ἄλογος sum». Here it is significant that the translator, Jerome, has retained the technical term ἄλογος, explaining that it means «absque sermone sive ratione».²³ After saying this, Moses received the word and the reason that he had recognized that he did not have. But the people of Israel not only did not recognize that they were ἄλογος (here again Jerome retains the Greek), but they manifest by their acts and by their silence that they do not have the word or reason.

In this interpretation, the term ἄλογος has received an additional meaning. Something is not simply absurd or without meaning, but also without the Word of God or the Logos, Jesus Christ. The Logos alone gives to the Jewish rites their λόγος, their spiritual sense. The silence of Zachary signifies that the Law, without Christ, no longer has meaning. To refuse the revelation of the Logos, to hold to the ordinances of the old law is to remain a friend of the letter, to be ἄλογος.²⁴ Thus the whole Old Testament could be said to be ἄλογος when it is not interpreted in the light of the Logos.

20 See Simonetti, *Lettera e/o Allegoria*, 85-86, 102, 115 et passim.

21 *HomLc* 5,2.

22 The text of these homilies exists only in the Latin translation of Jerome, but Crouzel assumes, reasonably, that this represents the Greek διδόναι λόγον. See Origène, *Homélies sur S. Luc. Texte latin et fragments grecs*, ed. H. Crouzel - F. Fournier - P. Périchon (Sch 87), Paris 1962, 139.

23 *HomLc* 5,3.

24 Origène, *Homélies sur S. Luc: Texte latin et fragments grecs*, 136, n.1.

DEFECTUS LITTERAE

Although Origen's theory and practice probably provide the immediate background necessary for understanding Rufus' application of the term ἄλογος to the camel (and thus to the Old Testament), it is of interest to note the long history of the idea that on the literal level a text may lack meaning or that the literal meaning is absurd. The idea that the OT Scriptures are ἄλογος (senseless) when not interpreted in the light of the Logos is obviously Christian but both the terminology and the notion of *defectus litterae* have a much older history. Already in the *Letter of Aristeas* we find the admonition: «For you must not fall into the degrading idea that it was out of regard to mice and weasels and other such things that Moses drew up his laws with such exceeding care. All these ordinances were made for the sake of righteousness to aid the quest for virtue and the perfecting of character».²⁵ One cannot avoid the impression that the commentator feels embarrassed by the text. For him the laws of the Pentateuch are the divinely inspired work of Moses but he cannot imagine that his God would be interested in making laws about mice and weasels, etc.

The second century Jewish exegete Aristobulos likewise seems to have felt it necessary to defend Moses from the charge of ἀλογία (wrong or literal interpretations).²⁶ The same terminology is found more extensively in the writings of Philo for whom the impossibility or absurdity of a scriptural passage serves as a trigger for an allegorical explanation. For example, with reference to Gen 2:7, he writes, «for God forbid that we should be infected with such monstrous folly (ἄτοπία) as to think that God employs for inbreathing organs such as mouth or nostrils; for God is not only not in the form of man, but belongs to no class or kind». He then proceeds to offer a double allegorical explanation (physical and ethical).²⁷

With reference to the statement in Gen 3:8 that the man hid himself from God, Philo comments: «Were one not to interpret it allegorically, it would be impossible (ἄδύνατον) to accept the statement, for God fills and penetrates all things, and has left no spot void or empty of his presence».²⁸

25 *Letter of Aristeas*, 144; see note 10 above.

26 N. Walter, *Der Thorausleger Aristobulos. Untersuchungen zu seinen Fragmenten und zu pseudepigraphischen Resten der jüdisch hellenistischen Literatur* (TU 86), Berlin 1964, 135.

27 *Leg. I*, 36-39. *Philo I*, ed. F.H. Colson - G.H. Whitaker (LCL 226), Cambridge, Mass. 1929, 171.

28 *Leg. III*, 4. *Philo I*, 303.

It is evident in these authors that a certain conception of God dominates their exegetical practice and what is inconsistent with this conception must be interpreted allegorically.²⁹ This approach appears to underly also Paul's citation of Deut 25:4 («You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out grain») in 1 Cor 9:8-10. He then applies this text allegorically to his own situation with the comment: «Is God concerned here for oxen, or does he not rather say this for our sakes?» This echoes the sentiment of pseudo Aristeas that God could hardly be concerned with mice and weasels.

The embarrassment of the ancient exegete before a text difficult to reconcile with his notion of God is perhaps expressed most clearly by Origen in commenting on Leviticus:

If, according to this interpretation, we say that the supreme God has promulgated laws to men, I think that the legislation will appear worthy of the divine majesty. If instead we insist on the letter and understand the things written in the law as it seems to the Jews and to the crowd, I am ashamed to say and to profess that God should have given such laws. In that case, the laws of men, for example of the Romans or of the Athenians or of the Spartans, will seem more refined and reasonable. If instead, the law of God is accepted according to the understanding which the church teaches, then it stands over all human laws and it will be believed that it is truly the Law of God.³⁰

This passage is actually the prelude to his explanation of the laws about clean and unclean animals, including that regarding the camel. For Origen «the understanding which the church teaches» means the tradition of allegorical exegesis or «spiritual» interpretation found already in the New Testament, particularly in the Pauline letters, which he understood to be his task to continue to elaborate.³¹

29 This was already the case in the pagan world as well with regard to the interpretation of Homer. See Pépin, *La Tradition de L'Allegorie*, 178-179 and the literature cited there. See also O. Dreyer, *Untersuchungen zum Begriff des Gottgeziemenden in der Antike* (Spudasmata 24), Hildesheim-New York 1970, and M. Sheridan «Digne deo». A Traditional Greek Principle of Interpretation in Latin Dress», in this volume, 391-408.

30 *HomLev* 7,5.

31 Origen is quite explicit on this point. In his view, the apostle Paul instructed the church on the use to be made of the books of the law and gave examples of interpretation that should be imitated in interpreting other passages. He speaks of the «canon of interpretation» and «the rules of interpretation» that Paul has given to the church. See especially *HomEx* 5,1 and *HomGn* 3,4. For a more extensive discussion of the Pauline inspiration

Related to the sense of embarrassment that the ancient exegete felt in the presence of these texts was his concern for the ethical and educational effects of the texts. The texts accepted on the literal level were dangerous or, put differently, they were unacceptable to the ancient exegete because their literal content was incompatible with his ethical and theological ideas. Origen expresses this perspective clearly in the same homily:

Recognize that the things written in the divine books are figures and therefore examine and therefore understand the things said as spiritual and not as carnal, since, if you receive them as carnal, they will wound you instead of nourishing you. Even in the gospels, there is the letter which kills (2 Cor 3:6) ... it (the gospel) says: «Whoever does not have a sword should sell his tunic and buy a sword» (Luke 22:36). See, this also is the letter of the gospel but it kills.³²

Both the sense of embarrassment and the concern for the ethical implications of literal readings of the texts have their parallels in the embarrassment and concern felt by Greek writers in the presence of the Homeric epics, which played a role in Greek culture and society similar to the role played by the Scriptures in Jewish and Christian society. This is evident already in the classic philosophers and continues to be a concern of philosophers (especially Stoic ones) and educators for many centuries because of the Homeric epics' central role in the Greek educational system. In this context it may be useful to recall that the patristic exegetes had received their intellectual formation in the traditional Greek schools where they undoubtedly learned the traditional methods of interpreting Homer.³³

THROUGH THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE

To return now to our original text: the thought of the shape and size of the camel finally leads Rufus, by the law of association (interpreting Scripture by

of Origen's exegetical theory, see F. Cocchini, *Il Paolo di Origene* (Verba Seniorum N.S. 11), Roma 1992, 117-148.

32 *HomLev* 7,5. A similar anxiety for the correct or spiritual interpretation of Scripture is found later in the monastic literature. Particularly instructive in this regard is Cassian's extensive discussion of the correct way to interpret the anthropomorphic terminology used of God in the Old Testament in the context of an analysis of the spiritual evils caused by human anger. It is evident that biblical texts were being used to justify human anger on the basis of God's «anger». See Cassian, *Inst.* 8.III-IV.

33 See Walter, *Der Thoraausleger Aristobulos*, 128; Pépin, *La Tradition de L'Allegorie*, 178-186.

Scripture), to think of another mention of the animal in Matt 19:24, where the question of the possibility of the rich man entering the kingdom of heaven is likened to the possibility of a camel passing through the eye of the needle. Rufus states that the «new Word» reduced the size of the Law and all its institutions so as to make it pass through the eye of the needle: «he reduced them through the spirit to make them enter through the discernment of allegory». The reference to the spirit is certainly a reference to 2 Cor 3:6ff., which becomes clearer as the homily continues. Discernment is what the law lacked (it did not split the hoof). Allegory is the key to discerning, to seeing beneath the letter to the spiritual meaning of the Law. When the Law is read in its spiritual meaning, it is no longer bulky and misshapen but, being spiritual, can pass through the eye of the needle.³⁴ That is, it acquires inner coherence and unity. For Rufus, it is the new Word who makes the Scriptures pass through the eye of the needle by means of allegory. For him, it is not just any sort of allegory but interpretation in terms of the Logos.

The term «allegory» is probably the most general and widely used of those expressions used to describe the Alexandrian exegetical practice.³⁵ In the New Testament Paul uses the expression to describe the story of Sarah and Hagar:

34 An additional reason for the association of the camel of Matt 19:24 with John's garment of camel's hair may be the use of the word ἄδύνατον in Matt 19:25. To the disciples' question about the rich man entering the kingdom of heaven, Jesus answers that what is impossible (ἄδύνατον) with man is possible with God. The word ἄδύνατον, along with ἄλογον, is one of the terms Origen uses in *PArch* 4, 2, 9 and 4, 3, 2 to describes passages that lack a literal sense. The implicit role of this term ἄδύνατον is a reason for suspecting that the whole interpretation of the camel may go back to Origen. At the least, it is inspired by his theory.

35 The word means literally «to say another thing» (from ἄλλα ἀγορεύειν). It is the rhetorical procedure by which one thing is said and another intended (See M. Simonetti, «Allegoria (tipologia)», in *Dizionario Patristico e di Antiquità Cristiane I*, Casale Monferrato 1983, 140). Although the verb ἀλληγορεῖν is found first in Philo and Josephus, the substantive ἀλληγορία is found as early as the sixth century in fragments of Metrodorus and Theagenes (see A. Ford, *The Origins of Criticism. Literary Culture and Poetic Theory in Classical Greece*, Princeton 2002). Plutarch says that what in his day was called ἀλληγορία, was earlier called ὑπόνοια (See F. Büchsel, «ἀλληγορέω», in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament I*, Stuttgart 1933, 260). Quintilian describes allegory as the continuous use of analogy, «μεταφορὰ continuata» (H.N. Bate, «Some Technical Terms of Greek Exegesis», *Journal of Theological Studies* 24 (1922-23) 60). Both the noun and the verb were used also to describe allegorical interpretation. This practice already had a long history in the Greek speaking world, particularly in the interpretation of Homer, before Philo used it systematically to interpret the Hebrew Scriptures. See especially J. Pépin, *Mythe et Allégorie. Les origines grecques et les contestations judéo chrétiennes*. Paris ²1976.

ἄτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα (Gal 4:24). Thus Paul provided the principal precedent and justification for the development of the Alexandrian tradition of allegorical interpretation.

Origen appeals to this text and to many other examples of Pauline allegorical exegesis to justify his theory that the whole of the Scriptures are to be interpreted allegorically. He concludes:

This being so, we must outline what seems to us the marks of a true understanding of the scriptures. And in the first place we must point out that the aim of the Spirit who, by the providence of God through the Word who was «in the beginning with God», enlightened the servants of the truth, that is, the prophets and apostles, was pre eminently concerned with the unspeakable mysteries connected with the affairs of men and by men I mean at the present moment souls that make use of bodies his purpose being that the man who is capable of being taught might by «searching out» and devoting himself to the «deep things» revealed in the spiritual meaning of the words become partaker of all the doctrines of the Spirit's counsel.³⁶

The «spiritual meaning of the words» is reached through the procedure of allegorical interpretation. All the representatives of the Alexandrian exegetical tradition, use both this procedure and these words to describe what they are doing.³⁷

CONCLUSIONS

Rufus' description of the camel (and of the Old Testament) as ἄλογον (absurd or senseless) should probably be understood in a double sense. For him, as for Origen, «worship of this carnal sort, circumcision, times, festivals, the temple» etc. were without meaning and without relevance. They had been superseded and had lost the original social and theological context which gave them meaning. Taken at face value, they formed no coherent unity with the rest of his religious world, which was shaped by Logos. Taken in their literal sense, they did not speak to him of Jesus Christ. Origen himself goes so far as to say that before the coming of Christ «it was not at all possible to bring forward clear proofs of

36 *PArch* 4, 2, 7.

37 See Simonetti, *Lettera e/o Allegoria*, Index s.v. *allegoria*, et passim; Bate, «Some Technical Terms of Greek Exegesis», 60. For Didymus, see W.A. Bienert, «*Allegoria*» und «*Anagoge*» bei Didymos dem Blinden von Alexandria, Berlin/New York 1972, 106-164. For Cyril, see Kerrigan, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 111-122. Cyril uses the term rarely.

the divine inspiration of the old scriptures».³⁸ We conclude that Rufus' explanation of the camel's hair garment worn by John is perfectly compatible with Origen's thought and could even reflect a lost text of the master exegete himself.

The passage from Rufus' homilies that we have examined, although it is one of the most interesting, is not an exception in its reliance on the Alexandrian exegetical tradition. Rufus employs extensive use of the Greek anthropological, noetical and exegetical terminology used earlier in that tradition. He makes extensive use of the traditional etymologies of Hebrew names found in Philo and Origen in order to generate allegorical interpretations. And, at least in the homilies on Luke, he seems to show direct acquaintance with those of Origen.³⁹ It is entirely possible that Rufus was also influenced by the works of Didymus, in whose works we find much of the same terminology. The works of Didymus are known to have been in circulation in Egypt in the sixth century because of the Tura manuscript find.⁴⁰

The evidence offered by the homilies of Rufus does not fit the traditional picture of Coptic culture in the late sixth century in upper Egypt in which the bishops are portrayed as generally ignorant.⁴¹ Nor does it fit the supposedly uniformly anti-Origenist tradition that one represented in the History of the Patriarchs, some of the Pachomian material, and one of Shenoute's writings. Under the influence of this tradition, one writer has even suggested that these homilies must in fact be translations from Greek productions of the fourth century at Nitria or Scetis.⁴² Against such a suggestion the following points may be made. First of all, Rufus is preaching to nuns in his homilies on Luke and there are no monasteries of nuns known to have existed at Nitria or Scetis in the fourth century or later.⁴³ Secondly, his interpretations depend at times on

38 *PArch* 4, 1, 6.

39 See Sheridan, *Rufus of Shotep*, 224-227, 299-300.

40 L. Koenen - W. Müller-Wiener, «Zu den Papyri aus dem Arsenioskloster bei Tura», *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 2 (1968) 51-52. The manuscripts from Tura date from the sixth century, evidence that Origen and Didymus continued to be copied and studied in Egypt despite the Origenist controversy at the end of the fourth century.

41 See J. Maspero - A. Fortescue - G. Wiet, *Histoire des Patriarches d'Alexandrie depuis la mort de l'Empereur Anastase jusqu'à la réconciliation des Eglises Jacobites (518-616)*, Paris 1923, 17-18.

42 P. Luisier, in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 64 (1998) 473.

43 On the location of monasteries of women, see E. Wipszycka, «Le monachisme égyptien et les villes» in *Études sur le christianisme dans l'Égypte de l'antiquité tardive* (SEAug 52), Roma 1996, 291-292.

the Sahidic translation of the New Testament text, showing that he was able to make creative use of the tradition. Thirdly, there would be no reason for attributing such works to an otherwise unknown figure. Pseudonymous works are generally attributed to well-known historical persons for one reason or another. Fourthly, Rufus uses expressions that reflect the theological atmosphere of the post-Chalcedonian period.⁴⁴ Although space does not allow us to develop the subject here, one may note in passing that there is other evidence for the survival of the Alexandrian tradition in Coptic literature, such as the homily on the Temple of Solomon attributed to Basil.⁴⁵ In any event, the homilies of Rufus of Shotep are evidence that the Alexandrian tradition was alive and well in upper Egypt at the end of the sixth century.

⁴⁴ See Sheridan, *Rufus of Shotep*, 54-57.

⁴⁵ E.A.W. Budge, *Coptic Homilies in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (Coptic Texts 1), London 1910, 105-114, 248-257. This homily also contains a quotation from Philo, *Spec.* 1,287 that Budge was unable to identify. See p. 250.

A HOMILY ON THE DEATH OF THE VIRGIN MARY ATTRIBUTED TO EVODIUS OF ROME¹

1. THE TEXTS

The *Homily on the Death of the Virgin Mary* attributed to Evodius of Rome exists in three distinct versions. Although the Bohairic version of this homily, classified among the «apocrypha» (CANT 133),² has been known since its publication by Lagarde in 1883,³ the Sahidic version, which is certainly earlier and the source of inspiration for the Bohairic one, has remained unpublished until very recently.⁴ The Sahidic version is found in two manuscripts from the Morgan Library: M596 and M598.⁵ In 1903 Spiegelberg published fragments (FR-SU 413-414) from a similar but different recension of what appears to be the same version.⁶ The original provenance of these fragments from the library in Strasbourg is at present unknown. More recently a portion of what may be

1 Published originally in: *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of A New Millenium 1. Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies, Leiden, 27 August - 2 September 2000* (Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta 133), ed. M. Immerzeel - J. Van Der Vliet, Leiden 2004, 393-405.

2 M. GEERARD, *Clavis Apocryphorum Novi Testamenti* (Corpus Christianorum), Turnhout, 1992 (= CANT).

3 P. DE LAGARDE, *Aegyptiaca*, Göttingen, 1883, 38-63.

4 The text with an English translation has been published by S.J. SHOEMAKER, «The Sahidic Coptic Homily on the Dormition of the Virgin Attributed to Evodius of Rome. An Edition from Morgan MSS 596 & 598 with Translation», *Analecta Bollandiana* 14 (1999) 241-283. A Spanish translation without the text has also been published: G. ARANDA PÉREZ, «Dormición de la Virgen: Relatos de la tradición copta», in *Apócrifos cristianos 2*, Madrid 1995, 105-126. The citations from the text and the English translations given in this article, however, are my own.

5 These manuscripts have been described by Depuydt: L. DEPUYDT, *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library* (Corpus of Illuminated Manuscripts 4), Leuven 1993, 305-311. They are items 158 and 159 in this catalogue. M598 is badly damaged.

6 W. SPIEGELBERG, «Eine sahidische Version der Dormitio Mariae», in *Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l'archéologie égyptiennes et assyriennes* 25 (1903) 1-4.

the same recension has come to light in a tomb in Old Dongola in the Sudan.⁷ The readings offered by the fragments published by Spiegelberg are not true variants, but rather a witness to a similar recension of the same Sahidic version. They indicate not only the usual types of textual variants but also a choice of different grammatical forms. The same is true of the text from Old Dongola. The existence of witnesses to this Sahidic version in an area stretching from the Faiyum to the Sudan shows that it once enjoyed wide diffusion.

Portions of another Sahidic version, much closer to the Bohairic version, also exist and have been published by Robinson.⁸ These incomplete and fragmentary texts, coming from the White Monastery, witness to a version similar to the Bohairic one, but sufficiently different that it cannot be described as merely a different recension.

2. THE COPTIC TRADITION CONCERNING THE DEATH OF THE VIRGIN MARY

The Coptic tradition regarding the death of the Virgin Mary has been treated most recently by S. Mimouni.⁹ He was hampered, however, in his attempt to describe the development of this tradition by the fact that the Sahidic version of the homily by Evodius remained unpublished.¹⁰ Thus he was unable to compare directly the contents of these two versions. Moreover, Mimouni's interest was limited to the development of the tradition regarding the dormition and the assumption of the Virgin. As will be explained below, we regard this as too narrow a perspective for understanding the content and the context of this homily, especially in the Sahidic version. Nevertheless, Mimouni has offered some use-

7 S. JACOBIELSKI, «Monastery of the Holy Trinity at Old Dongola - A Short Archeological Report», in *The Spirituality of Ancient Monasticism. Acts of the International Colloquium Cracow-Tyniec, 16-19.11.1994*, ed. M. Starowieyski, Cracow-Tyniec, 1995, 35-45. My identification six years ago in Cracow of this text, which Prof. Jacobielski brought to my attention, has in fact led to the present study.

8 F. ROBINSON, *Coptic Apocryphal Gospels, Translations together with the Texts of Some of them* (Texts and Studies 4.2), Cambridge 1896, 67-89.

9 S.C. MIMOUNI, «Genèse et évolution des traditions anciennes sur le sort final de Marie. Étude de la tradition littéraire copte», *Marianum* 52 (1991) 69-143. A shorter version of the same is found in S.C. MIMOUNI, *Dormition et assomption de Marie* (Théologie Historique 98), Paris 1995.

10 MIMOUNI, «Genèse et évolution», 101.

ful information. Building upon the work of van Esbroeck,¹¹ he offered a table of the various texts in which the death of the Virgin is recounted. On the basis of whether or not the texts know of one feast (the dormition) or two (the dormition and the assumption) Mimouni classifies the texts as follows:

Dormition: Gospel of Bartholomew (Sahidic) (C 0), Cyril of Jerusalem (Sahidic) (C 2), Evodius (Sahidic) - M596/598 (C 3).

Dormition and Assumption: - Transitus ordinarius (Sahidic account) (C 1/1), Evodius in Bohairic (C 4), Theodosius (Bohairic) (C 5).

Assumption only: Theophilus of Alexandria (Sahidic) (C 6).

As Mimouni notes, in the Coptic tradition, the development of the doctrine of the Assumption did not result in the absorption of the already established feast of the Dormition celebrated on the 21 of Tobe (27 December - 26 January), but rather in the establishment of a new feast celebrated on the 16th of Mesore (25 July - 23 August), 206 days later.

Mimouni's analysis of the account of the Sahidic Evodius (M596), however, made on the basis of second hand information, leaves much to be desired. According to Mimouni, the text shows clearly a belief in the «dormition», but not in the assumption. Noting that a crowd of angels intervenes and takes the body of the Virgin away before it can be placed in the tomb in the valley of Josephat, and that afterwards Jesus appears to the apostles together with Mary, Mimouni concludes that this reveals a contradiction, since the appearance of Mary shows that she is already resurrected. He then suggests that the appearance of Mary represents a late interpolation, and concludes that the absence of any indication concerning the death of Mary in the interpolation might be due to a Julianist milieu for the composition.

We are unable to follow these conclusions. In the first place it is quite clear in the account that the Virgin dies. This is repeatedly reinforced by the insistence of Jesus that all must die, including he himself. In fact this insistence on the need for all to die could be interpreted as anti-Julianist. The appearance of Mary does not reveal that she is already participating in the resurrection, but that her soul is with God.

3. THE CONTENTS OF THE SAHIDIC HOMILY

Only the final part of the homily (126-162) is devoted to the death of the Virgin. Most of it is devoted to praising the Virgin as Theotokos, traditionally trans-

11 See M. VAN ESBRÖECK, *Aux origines de la Dormition de la Vierge. Études historiques sur les traditions orientales* (Collected Studies Series 472), Aldershot 1995.

lated as «Mother of God», and to insisting on the reality of the divinity and humanity of Jesus, both as a child and later in life. Much of the central section devoted to the polemic against the Jews is in fact polemic against all those who do not accept the full reality of his divinity or the full reality of the Incarnation. In reality this polemic is implicitly directed, as will be suggested below, against the Nestorians and those who accept the language of the Council of Chalcedon.

4. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SAHIDIC AND BOHAIRIC VERSIONS

The Bohairic version contains many elements not found in the Sahidic version and omits many of those found in the latter. Missing, for example, is the invitation to the prophets to come to the heavenly wedding feast, as well as the litany of titles of the Virgin. The anti-Jewish polemic is present but the series of witness texts against the Jews who deny the Incarnation is omitted. Instead there is substituted a series of questions directed to the Jews.

The Bohairic version is not a translation of the Sahidic homily, which is relatively sober by comparison. The Bohairic author has given much more space to the description of the death of the Virgin, which becomes much more dramatic and filled with folkloristic elements.¹² The Bohairic version does not emphasize the perpetual virginity (*post-partum*) of Mary and the insistence on the idea of *Maria Lactans* is much reduced, as will be noted below.

It may be concluded that the Bohairic version was inspired by the Sahidic homily, but it is an independent composition reflecting different interests and liturgical developments of a later period. Further analysis will be necessary in order to determine more precisely the relationship of the other fragmentary Sahidic texts published by Robinson to both this Sahidic homily and the Bohairic version.

5. RELATIONSHIP OF THIS HOMILY TO OTHER TEXTS

To understand the original setting and purpose of this homily, it is not sufficient to locate it in the corpus of texts relating to the death of the Virgin. One must examine also its relation to other texts ascribed to Evodius and to other texts in the homiletic tradition concerning the Virgin Mary, particularly those texts as-

12 See J. ZANDEE, *Death as an Enemy According to Ancient Egyptian Conceptions* (Studies in the History of Religions, Supplements to Numen V), Leiden 1960; O.H.E. BURMESTER, «Egyptian Mythology in the Coptic Apocrypha», *Orientalia* 7 (1938) 355-367.

cribed pseudonymously to non-existent persons or to persons who certainly did not produce these texts. For this purpose a precise analysis of the terminology and the images used in the homily is necessary.

5.1 The Homily on the Passion ascribed to Evodius

There exist two other homilies attributed to Evodius of Rome, one given the title *In apostolos* by Orlandi,¹³ which has survived in fragments, and another on the passion, also from the Morgan collection.¹⁴ There are good reasons for thinking that the author of the latter homily is the same as the one who composed the homily on the death of the Virgin. These include the attribution to Evodius, the use of the same or similar expressions, including certain relatively rare words, the anti-Jewish polemic, and the insistence on the divinity and humanity of Jesus.

In addition to the attribution contained in the inscription of the homily on the passion (here EP), Evodius describes himself as an eyewitness (§4) as he does in the homily on the Virgin (here EV). There are also references to commanders, dignitaries and all ranks: **ΕΠΑΡΧΟΣ, ΑΞΙΩΜΑΤΙΚΟΣ, ΔΑΓΜΑ** (§2) as in EV. EP contains extensive polemic against the Jews as does EV, who are described in both as «lawless ones» (**Ω ΜΠΑΡΑΝΟΜΟΣ**) (EP §48). The unusual Latin word «cursor» (**ΝΚΟΥΡCΟΝ**) (EP §49) is found in both, as is the word «cataract» (**ΚΑΤΑΡΑΚΤΗΣ**) (EP §60). In both homilies Christ is described as **ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΠΛΟΓΟΣ** «God the Logos» (EP §15; EV 90. 102). EP also contains references to Maria Lactans as does EV including the mention of «virginal milk» (**ΠΕΡΩΤΕ ΜΠΑΡΘΕΝΙΚΟΝ**) (EP §15; cp. EV 32) and a description of Christ as «who had sucked her breasts» (EP §89). The insistence on the divinity of Jesus is pervasive in the homily on the passion as well as the insistence on the reality of his incarnation (EP §15: «a flesh that suffers like ours» [**ΝΟΥ- CΑΡΞ ΝΡΕCΩΕΠΖΙCΕ ΝΘΕ ΝΤΩΝ**] and is «consubstantial with us» [**ΝΖΟ- ΜΟΟΥCΙΟΝ ΝΜΜΑΝ**]), both of which are characteristics of EV. A more detailed analysis would reveal additional points of similarity.

13 See the electronic clavis at: <http://rmcisadu.let.uniroma1.it/~cmcl/>

14 M595 (ff. 28r-51r). For the description of the manuscript, see DEPUYDT, *Catalogue*, p. 346. The homily has been published in: *Homiletica from the Pierpont Morgan Library: Seven Coptic Homilies Attributed to Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, and Euodius of Rome*, ed. L. Depuydt et al., (CSCO 43-44), Louvain, 1991.

5.2 The Homily of Damian on the Nativity

The Homily on the Nativity by the patriarch Damian (578-607), published recently in electronic form by Orlandi¹⁵, contains a number of elements similar to the homily of Evodius. These include the scriptural epithets with which Mary is addressed: «cloud»¹⁶ and «field»¹⁷ as well as the insistence on the divinity of Jesus (e.g., p 343). Damian also employs contrasts similar to those found in Evodius:

(p 379.00) ΠΕΤΕ ΜΕΡΕ ΜΑ ΥΟΠ̄Υ ΑΥΩ[Ρ]Β ΕΖΟΥΝ Ζ̄Ν ΤΟΥΟΟΤΕ·

«The one who cannot be contained in any place was enclosed in your womb».

Compare this with Evodius (46): «If I compare you to the heaven, truly you are higher than it, because the one who created the heaven and the earth, has dwelt within you for nine months».

Especially worthy of note in Damian's homily is the emphasis on the image of *Maria Lactans* and on her perpetual virginity.

(p 376.00) ΠΟΥΩΗΡΕ ΑΜΑΖΤΕ Ν̄ΤΟΥΕΚΙΒΕ 4† Μ̄ΜΟC ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕΤΕ4ΤΑΠΡΟ Ν̄ΝΟΥΤΕ Μ̄ΠΕ ΤΟΥΠΑΡΘΕΝΙΑ ΒΩΛ ΕΒΟΛ

«Your son takes your breast and puts it into his divine mouth and your virginity was not dissolved».

The image of nursing is repeated in p 377 and p 378.

6. THE HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SETTING

Two important and prominent elements in the Sahidic homily offer a clue to the historical and theological setting of the homily:

15 Found at: <http://rmcisadu.let.uniroma1.it/~cmcl/>

16 (p 121.00) χαῖρε μαρία τεκλοολε ετασωου ετρωοειν ενετ2μοοc 2μ πκακε μ̄ν θαῖβес μ̄πμοу «Hail Mary, bright cloud that illumines those who are in darkness and the shadow of death». Evodius addresses her instead as «golden lamp-stand» (52). These texts had been published previously in: F. ROSSI, *I Papiri Copti del Museo Egizio di Torino 1-2*, Torino 1888-1892, and W.E. CRUM, *Theological Texts from Coptic Papyri* (Analecta Oxoniensia, Semitic Series 12), Oxford 1913.

17 (p 130.00) χαῖρε [μαρία] τσωδε εττββηу етере πμα[ρ]καpιtic н2нтс ете παῖπε пенхоеис іс пex̄c [] «Hail Mary, pure field in which is found the pearl, that is, our Savior Jesus Christ». This is actually a conflation of Matt 13:44 + 45-46. Evodius uses only verse 44 «treasure found hidden in a field» (44).

6.1 Maria Lactans - Maria Galaktotrophusa

One of the notable features of this homily is the insistence on the image of Mary nursing Christ understood precisely as God.¹⁸ There are no less than six references to this phenomenon:

32. Come now and see Emanuel, God, raised on her knees feeding on virgin milk.

43. It is you that I wish to see, O beautiful dove, as he stretches forth his hand and takes hold of your spotless breast, putting it into his divine mouth.

61. And: «he has desired your breasts more than wine». (Cant 1:1; 1:3; 4:10 LXX).

113. and if you nursed me on your knees and with your arms,

117. And if you kissed me with your mouth and nursed me with your virgin milk,

136. O my mother, blessed are your breasts that have given me suck.

To understand the insistence on this image, it is necessary to be acquainted with its role in the dispute with Nestorius, where it first emerges as a point of doctrinal controversy. In the general context of questioning the suitability of calling Mary *Theotokos* as opposed to *Christotokos*, one of the points that Nestorius specifically called in question was the legitimacy of speaking of Mary as having nursed God. The importance of this disputed point may be seen in the fact that it is contained in the second letter of Nestorius to Cyril, which was included in the Acts of the Council of Ephesus, and in the letter of the Council of Ephesus to the clergy of Constantinople affirming the legitimacy of speaking

18 For a discussion of the theme of *Maria lactans* (*Galaktotrophusa*), see A. GRILLMEIER, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche. 2/4: Die Kirche von Alexandrien mit Nubien und Äthiopien nach 451*, Freiburg im Breisgau 1990, 286-290 and the literature cited there. See now also L. LANGENER, *Isis lactans - Maria lactans. Untersuchungen zur koptischen Ikonographie* (ASKÄ 9), Altenberge 1996. Although the author treats the literary sources (235-259), she does not take note of the letter of Nestorius, of the Acts of the Council of Ephesus, nor of the text of Shenoute (see note 19 below). The image of Mary nursing Jesus occurs as early as the Protoevangelium of James (CANT 50) (ca. 200) XIX,2, but without the specific emphasis on his divinity. See LANGENER, *Isis lactans - Maria lactans*, 235, and M. ERBETTA, *Gli apocrifi del nuovo testamento I/2*, Casale Monferrato 1981, 26.

of Mary as having nursed God. In both texts the word *galaktotrophusa* is used explicitly.¹⁹

This disputed point had already entered into the Coptic literary tradition in the writings of Shenoute, Nestorius' contemporary and opponent. Shenoute states of Nestorius that: «He also said therefore that it is not fitting to say that "A virgin begot a God" and that "I will not say that he is a God who spent nine months in the womb and who was suckled and grew little by little"». ²⁰ The last phrase is a reference to Luke 2:52, an allusion to which is found also in our homily §38: «even though we did indeed see him having grown in age like every man». The word for breast (ΕΚΙΒΕ - «was suckled») in this quotation from Shenoute is found in §136 of our homily, where the allusion is to Luke 11:27: «Blessed are the breasts...», undoubtedly the scriptural source of the controversy.

The image of *Maria Galaktotrophusa* is found in another Coptic homily attributed to Evodius of Rome, *On the Passion and the Resurrection*, in language very similar to that found in the present homily: «In the ninth month, like all human beings, she gave birth to him and nourished him with virginal milk». ²¹ The last phrase is virtually the same as found in §117 (see above) of our homily. The image of Mary nursing is found also in the *Homily on Christmas and the Virgin* attributed to Demetrius of Antioch, §738: «Behold Mary is seated in the dwelling nursing the Son of God», and §761 «He was suckled from a virgin as a child». ²² As already noted above, the homily of Damian on the Nativity contains several references to Mary nursing Jesus.

19 E. SCHWARTZ (ed.), *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum I, Concilium Universale Ephesenum* T.1, Vol.1, Pars 1, ed. E. Schwartz, Berlin 1927, 31 (the second letter of Nestorius); for the letter of the council to the clergy of Constantinople, see T. 1, Vol. 1, Pars 3, 13.

20 ΑΥΧΟΟC ΔΕ ΟΝ ΧΕ ΕΤΒΕ ΠΑΙ ΝΩΨΕ ΑΝ ΕΧΟΟC ΧΕ ΑΤΠΑΡΘΕΝΟC ΧΠΕ ΟΥΝΟΥΤΕ· ΑΥΩ ΧΕ ΝΤΝΑΧΟΟC ΑΝ ΧΕ ΟΥΝΟΥΤΕ ΠΕ ΠΕΝΤΑΨ ΨΟΜΤ ΝΕΒΟΤ ΖΝ ΘΗ· ΑΥΩ ΑΥΧΙ ΕΚΙΒΕ ΑΥΠΡΟΚΟΠΤΕ ΚΟΥΙ ΚΟΥΙ· T. ORLANDI, *Shenute contra Origenistas. Testo con introduzione e traduzione*, Roma 1985, 54, §0480. The last phrase, «growing little by little», is a reference to Luke 2:52 (Καὶ Ἰησοῦς προέκοπτεν [ἐν τῇ] σοφίᾳ καὶ ἡλικίᾳ). It is also one of the points mentioned by Nestorius in his second letter to Cyril. See *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum I, Concilium Universale Ephesenum*, ed. E. Schwartz, T.1, Vol.1, Pars 1, Berlin, 1927, 31.

21 DEPUYDT, *Homiletica*, 83, §15: ΖΝ ΟΥΧΡΟΝΟC ΜΠΨΙC ΝΕΒΟΤ ΝΘΕ ΝΡΩΜΕ ΝΙΜ ΑCΧΠΟC ΑCΑΝΟΥΨC ΖΜ ΠΕΡΩΤΕ ΜΠΑΡΘΕΝΙΚΟΝ·

22 K. MODRAS, *Omelia Copta attribuita a Demetrio di Antiochia sul Natale e Maria Vergine*, Roma 1994, (= MODRAS, *Omelia Copta attribuita a Demetrio di Antiochia*), 78, §738: ΕCΨ ΕΚΕΙΒΕ ΜΠΨΗΡΕ ΜΠΝΟΥΤΕ; 79, §761: ΑΥΧΙ ΕΚΕΙΒΕ ΖΝ ΟΥΠΑΡΘΕΝΟC ΖΩC ΨΗΡΕ ΨΗΜ·

In the light of all these texts, it seems clear that the insistence on this image of Mary nursing Jesus was a way of affirming the anti-Nestorian understanding of the Incarnation. In the later Egyptian theological tradition this was equivalent to an anti-Chalcedonian affirmation, for Chalcedon was understood by the Egyptians as having adopted the position of Nestorius.²³

6.2 Mary's Perpetual Virginity (post-partum)

Another related idea that our author stresses repeatedly is the perpetual virginity of Mary, that is, after the birth of Jesus:

27. Those who are in the heaven of heavens and those who are on the earth rejoice with you, O Virgin Mary. It is not only males who rejoice but also women rejoice because a woman has given birth to this great one in his days and he did not harm her virginity.

30. And when he came forth from her, the bonds of her virginity were not broken.

35. O Ezekiel, arise and come into our midst today and see the gate (cf. Ezek 44:2) that is shut, through which the ruler has gone within and also out of which he has come, while it is shut as it was previously,²⁴ [f. 21r] that is, the holy virgin Mary, from whom came forth the King of kings and the bonds of her virginity remained sealed as previously.

37. It is at the time when you gave birth to God without change or illusion that I wish to see you, O Mary,

23 It has been suggested that there is no connection between the theological tradition and the iconographical tradition in Coptic art. See L. LANGENER, *Isis lactans - Maria lactans. Untersuchungen zur koptischen Ikonografie in Ägypten und Nubien in apäntiker und christlicher Zeit. Akten des 6. Internationalen Koptologenkongresses Münster, 20. - 26. Juli 1996* (Sprachen und Kulturen des Christlichen Orients 6,1; ed. S. Emmel - M. Krause - S.G. Richter - S. Schaten, Wiesbaden 1999, 223-229). However, in view of the repeated emphasis on the idea in the homiletic tradition, it is difficult not to see a connection. The connection in one case is clear: the Morgan manuscripts contain two images of *Maria Lactans* (M574, f.1v and M612, f.1v). Both images depict Mary sheltered by the wings of the Seraphim, an idea contained in the present homily (115: «I will shelter you with the wings of the Seraphim»). For the images, see: L. DEPUYDT, *Catalogue* (Corpus of Illuminated Manuscripts 5), plates 11-12.

24 The Sahidic text of Ezek 44:2 is not extant. The LXX reads: καὶ εἶπεν κύριος πρὸς με Ἡ πόλις αὕτη κεκλεισμένη ἔσται, οὐκ ἀνοιχθήσεται, καὶ οὐδεὶς μὴ διέλθῃ δι' αὐτῆς, ὅτι κύριος ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ εἰσελεύσεται δι' αὐτῆς, καὶ ἔσται κεκλεισμένη.

53. O honored thorn-bush (Exod 3:2) in which the spiritual fire did not burn the bonds of your virginity.²⁵

This belief antedates the Nestorian controversy and is found in an increasing number of writers toward the end of the fourth century.²⁶ One indication of its development is the application of the texts Exod 3:2 and Ezek 44:2 to the Virgin Mary, an interpretation that is not found in earlier writers (e.g., Origen). Gregory of Nyssa, for example, interprets Exod 3:2 to refer to the virginity *post-partum*.²⁷ The interpretation of Exod 44:2 in this sense is found in Amphilochus of Iconium (+398/404)²⁸ and in Jerome (end of 393).²⁹ However, to appreciate the full significance of this belief in the context of the Nestorian controversy, one must be acquainted with the explanation given by Proclus in a homily preached in the presence of Nestorius in the Christmas season of 430 and clearly intended to be a refutation of Nestorius' ideas. Proclus explicitly applies both of these texts to the Virgin and states:

If the mother had not remained a virgin, then the child born would have been a mere man and the birth no miracle. But if she remained a virgin even after birth, then indeed he was wondrously born who also entered unhindered "when the doors were sealed," whose union of natures was proclaimed by Thomas who said, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28).³⁰

25 On this and other epithets, see ROMANUS MELODUS (+555-565c.), *Inno 2 dell'Annunciazione*, in *Testi Mariani del Primo Millennio. 1. Padri e altri autori greci*, ed. G. Gharib et al., Roma 1988, 702-704. CPG 7570.

26 The earliest text may be that of the Protoevangelium of James XX,1-2 (CANT 50). See ERBETTA, *Gli apocrifi del nuovo testamento* I/2, 26.

27 *De uita Moysis*, II, 21: GREGORIO DI NISSA, *La vita di Mosè*, ed. M. Simonetti, Milano 1984, 72.

28 *Homilia de Occursu Domini* 2-3 (PG 39, 48A-49B), in *Testi Mariani* 1, 337. Origen does not apply the text to Virgin but to the question of interpreting the Scriptures. See also Theodoretus of Cyrrus, *Commentary on Ezechiel*, 44; PG 81, 1233A-B: (it refers to the womb of the virgin), in *Testi Mariani* 1, 584; Hesychius of Jerusalem (+ after 451), *Omelia sull'Ipapante* (PG 93, 1467-1478), in *Testi Mariani* 1, 535.

29 *Epist.* 49,21 (to Pammachius) CSEL 54, p. 386.

30 The Greek text is found among the documents appended to the Acts of the Council of Ephesus, *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum* I, *Concilium Universale Ephesenum* I,1, ed. E. Schwartz, Berlin 1927, 104: εἰ μὴ παρθένος ἔμεινεν ἡ μήτηρ, ψιλὸς ἄνθρωπος ὁ τεχθεὶς καὶ οὐ παράδοξος ὁ τόκος· εἰ δὲ καὶ μετὰ τόκον ἔμεινεν παρθένος, ἐκεῖνος ἀρράστως ἐγεννήθη ὁ καὶ τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων ἀκολύτως εἰσελθὼν, οὗ τὴν συζυγίαν τῶν φύσεων ὁ Θωμᾶς ἀνακεκράγει λέγων ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου. The English translation is from N. Conostas, *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity*, Leiden-Boston 2003, 139.

This interpretation was obviously intended to justify the title Theotokos (literally: «she who gave birth to God» = «Mother of God»), the principle point of contention with Nestorius. Proclus' homily, considered of sufficient importance to be appended to the acts of the Council of Ephesus, was translated into many languages including Coptic.³¹

That the affirmation of the perpetual virginity of Mary continued to have the same importance in the latter part of the sixth century in Egypt, is clear from the Synodical Letter of the Patriarch Damian addressed to Jacob Baradeus, where it is implied that some deny this belief, and consequently the full reality of the Incarnation.³² It is found also in the Homily on the Nativity attributed to Demetrius of Antioch with a reference to Ezek 44:3.³³

7. THE PURPOSE OF THE SAHIDIC TEXTS ATTRIBUTED TO EVODIUS OF ROME

The attribution of the homily *On the Death of the Virgin* to Evodius of Rome cannot be a later development; it forms part of the narrative idea in both this homily and in the one on the Passion and Resurrection. The figure of Evodius of Rome is otherwise unknown, but in these homilies he is repeatedly identified as the successor of Peter as bishop of Rome. An Evodius of Antioch is mentioned by Eusebius as the first bishop and predecessor of Ignatius of Antioch.³⁴ It was an easy step to move him to Rome as the companion and successor of Peter there.

What would have been the purpose of attributing the homily to Evodius? In general works are ascribed pseudonymously in antiquity to give them authority by placing them in an earlier period and by attributing them to a figure with established authority. The process is evident already within the New Testament canon where a number of letters are ascribed to Paul (the deutero-Pauline letters and the Pastoral letters). By placing Evodius in Rome, he becomes a predecessor

31 For the versions, see M. Geerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum 2. Ab Athanasio ad Chrysostomum*, (Corpus Christianorum), Turnhout 1974, no. 5800. For an analysis of the historical, social and theological background of this homily, see especially N.P. CONSTAS, «Weaving the Body of God: Proclus of Constantinople, the Theotokos and the Loom of the Flesh», *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3 (1995) 169-194.

32 H.E. WINLOCK - W.E. CRUM, *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes 2*, New York 1926, 334.

33 K. MODRAS, *Omelia Copta attribuita a Demetrio di Antiochia*, 52, §114.

34 See EUSEBIUS, *Hist. eccl.* 3.22.1.1: Ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ἐπ' Ἀντιοχείας Εὐδοδίου πρώτου καταστάντος δευτέρος ἐν τοῖς δηλουμένοις Ἰγνάτιος ἐγνωρίζετο. See R. AUBERT, «Evo-dius», in *Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie Ecclésiastique* 16, Paris 1967, 133.

of the much reviled Leo, the author of the «Tome» adopted by the Council of Chalcedon, which contained the language of the «two natures», unacceptable to the Egyptian church and in apparent conflict with the terminology used by Cyril. As already noted above, from the Egyptian point of view, the Council of Chalcedon had adopted the position of Nestorius.³⁵ Evodius, as successor of Peter, and predecessor of Leo, thus becomes an authoritative spokesman for the orthodox point of view against Nestorius and Chalcedon. This is accomplished through repeated emphasis on certain key images and ideas, which had become code terms for the correct faith.

8. AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

One can then ask what is the most likely period for this kind of activity. The homily appears to have been composed in Coptic; there is no reason for thinking otherwise. Thus the intended audience was the native Egyptian speaking church. Since the purpose seems to have been to reinforce the correct faith against what were regarded as heretical positions, the most likely period for its composition would be when that faith was under pressure. Such was the case in the period from the accession of Justin I (518) until the Arab conquest (641). After the Arab conquest, the Byzantine government was unable to exert further pressure on the Egyptian church.

Within this period (518-641), the time of greatest literary activity seems to have been during the patriarchate of Damian (578-607). In the History of the Patriarchs we find the following passage:

And Damian, the blessed patriarch, remained all his days composing letters and homilies and treatises, in which he refuted the heretics. And there were in his days certain bishops whom he admired, marveling at their purity and excellence; and among them was John of Burlus, and John his disciple, and Constantine the bishop, and Cleistus, and many others who tended the vineyard of the Lord of Sabaoth.³⁶

35 See the *Synodicon* of Damian, (WINLOCK - CRUM, *The Monastery of Epiphanius* 2, 335), which says of Chalcedon: «that Synod took as excuse that it would depose the impious Eutyches, yet it established the vain babble of Nestorius». See also J. MASPERO - A. FORTESCUE - G. WIET, *Histoire des Patriarches d'Alexandrie depuis la mort de l'Empereur Anastase jusqu'à la réconciliation des Eglises Jacobites (518-616)*, Paris 1923, 252, citing John of Nikiou in this sense, i.e., «Nestorian» equals «catholic» or the opposite of «orthodox» or «Jacobite».

36 B. EVETTS, *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria (Severus of Ashmunein)* (PO 1), Paris 1910, 477.

Although the author of the History probably had in mind the ecclesiastical achievements of these bishops, each of them also engaged in literary activity.³⁷ To these must be added also the bishop Rufus of Shotep.³⁸ The long reign of the patriarch Damian appears to have been a period of consolidation and stabilization of the non-Chalcedonian church in Egypt. The previous period, during the long exile of the patriarch Theodosius in Constantinople, had been one of anarchy in which the number of non-Chalcedonian groups alone had increased to at least twenty. These included Stephanites, Petrites, Tritheists, Acephalites, and Gaianites (Julianites). Against all of these Damian struggled and, through encyclicals, letters and journeys, he attempted to bring them back into unity.³⁹ Against this background, it seems reasonable to propose, as a working hypothesis, the reign of Damian as the period in which to locate the pseudonymous literary activity, which aimed to strengthen and solidify the non-Chalcedonian faith. This would include the author of the homilies attributed to Evodius and perhaps also the homily attributed to Demetrius of Antioch, in which similar expressions are found.⁴⁰ It is not unimaginable that Damian might have had a hand in this activity, either directly or by inspiring others to engage in it. However, more careful examination of the other surviving Sahidic homiletic literature will be necessary to ground such a hypothesis.

37 T. ORLANDI, «La patrologia copta», in *Complementi Interdisciplinari di Patrologia*, ed. A. Quacquarelli, Roma 1989, 497-502.

38 J.M. SHERIDAN, *Rufus of Shotep. Homilies on the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Introduction, Text, Translation, Commentary* (Unione Accademica Nazionale, Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari), Roma 1998.

39 C.D.G. MÜLLER, «Die koptische Kirche zwischen Chalkedon und dem Arabereinmarsch», *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 75 (1964) 279.

40 SHOEMAKER, *The Sahidic Coptic Homily*, 245, proposes «a reasonably certain terminus ante quem of about 550» for the composition of the Evodius homily. However, his argument is based on the fact that the homily of Theodosius on the Assumption knows of a feast of the Assumption and not merely one of the Dormition as in the case of the Evodius homily. He suggests that Theodosius composed this homily at the end of his life (566-567) and concludes that the Evodius homily must antedate it. This argument presumes that the homily attributed to Theodosius, which exists only in a Bohairic version, is authentic. This is far from certain; it may in fact belong to the same pseudonymous literary activity as the homilies attributed to Evodius. For the text of the homily ascribed to Theodosius, see ROBINSON, *Coptic Apocryphal Gospels*, 90-126 and M. CHAINE, «Sermon de Théodose, patriarche d'Alexandrie, sur la Dormition et l'Assomption de la Vierge», *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 29 (1933-1934) 276-304.

REVIEW OF: *QUATRE ERMITES ÉGYPTIENS*¹

G. Bunge - A. de Vogüé, *Quatre ermites égyptiens. D'après les fragments coptes de l'histoire lausiaque* (Spiritualité Orientale 60), Bégrolles-en-Mauges 1994.²

This volume brings together in an attractive and useful format several articles published already in *Studia Monastica*: G. BUNGE, «Palladiana. I. Introduction aux fragments coptes de l'Histoire Lausiaque», *Studia Monastica* 32 (1990) 79-129; A. DE VOGÜÉ, «Palladiana. II. La version copte de l'Histoire Lausiaque. I. Le Prologue et la Vie de Pambo», *Studia Monastica* 32 (1990) 323-340; A. DE VOGÜÉ - G. BUNGE, «Palladiana. III. La version copte de l'Histoire Lausiaque. II. La vie d'Évagre», *Studia Monastica* 33 (1991) 7-22; A. DE VOGÜÉ, «Palladiana. IV. La version copte de l'Histoire Lausiaque», *Studia Monastica* 34 (1992) 7-28; A. DE VOGÜÉ, «Palladiana. V. La version copte de l'Histoire Lausiaque», *Studia Monastica* 34 (1992) 217-232.

In the lengthy introduction to this volume Bunge gives a masterful summary of the problems connected with the text of the *Historia Lausiaca* (HL) including the interference caused by anti-Origenist censure. In order to explain what he calls the «lateral» tradition represented chiefly by «Palladian» material in Coptic not found in the Greek text of this work, he advances the hypothesis that Palladius wrote an earlier work during his first stay in Egypt destined for a more restricted audience (monks) than the HL which was destined for the chamberlain Lausus. He would have made use of this work himself in composing the HL.

1 This review appeared originally in French in *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 57 (1995), Bulletin de spiritualité monastique 13, 548-552. More recently A. Guillaumont also expressed serious reservations regarding the hypothesis of Bunge regarding two different recensions for the *Historia Lausiaca* by Palladius in order to account for the Coptic texts that differ notably from the Greek texts. Therefore it seems useful to include an English version of my review here. According to Guillaumont the Coptic texts represent later expansions. This seems to me also the more likely explanation. See A. GUILLAUMONT, *Un philosophe au désert Évagre le Pontique*, Paris 2009, 17-20.

2 An English version of this work has also appeared: *Four Desert Fathers: Pambo, Evagrius, Macarius Of Egypt, And Macarius Of Alexandria. Coptic Texts Relating To The Lausiaca History Of Palladius* (Popular Patristics), ed. R.A. Greer, tr. T. Vivian, New York 2004.

The hypothesis is supported by reference to the historian Socrates who mentions a *monobiblion* (a single volume) as one of his sources but who includes details in his description of Evagrius that are not found in the HL (also, it might be noted, a single volume). Presumably they were to be found in the *monobiblion*, which is to be identified with Palladius' first hypothetical composition. And it would be material from this work that has found its way into what are termed the Coptic «synaxaires». The authors do not claim that these Coptic pieces give us a «pure» text of the hypothetical *monobiblion*. This is undoubtedly a very attractive theory and one can only express gratitude for the lucid exposition of an extremely complex matter including the careful comparisons of the material to be found in the different sources. It is likewise a considerable advantage to have the new translations of all this material by Vogüé which includes: 1. the letter-Preface and Prologue to the HL, 2. the Life of Pambo (HL 10), 3. the Life of Macarius of Egypt (HL 17), 4. the Life of Macarius of Alexandria (HL 18), 5. the Life of Evagrius and, in an appendix, the Greek fragment of the Life of Evagrius published by Cotelier.

It is necessary, however, to express some reservations with regard to the Coptic text and it may be useful to provide some information not contained in this volume. In a series of articles mentioned but not included in this volume P. de Vogüé has published numerous corrections to the text previously published by Amélineau and Chainé. In order to assemble the Coptic text that corresponds to these translations it is necessary to have all of the following: E. AMÉLINEAU, *De historia lausiaca quaenam sit huius ad monachorum aegyptiorum historiam scribendam utilitas...*, Paris 1887, 73-124. E. AMÉLINEAU, *Histoire des monastères de la Basse-Egypte. Vies des saints Paul, Antoine, Macaire, Maxime et Domèce, Jean Le Nain, &c. Texte copte et traduction française* (Annales du Musée Guimet 25, Monuments pour servir à l'histoire de l'Egypte chrétienne), Paris 1894. M. CHAÎNE, «La double recension de l'Histoire Lausiaque dans la version copte», *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 25 (1925-6) 232-275; A. DE VOGÜÉ, «Les fragments coptes de l'Histoire Lausiaque. L'édition d'Amélineau et le manuscrit», *Orientalia* 58 (1989) 326-332; A. DE VOGÜÉ, «La version copte du chapitre XVII de l'Histoire Lausiaque. Les deux éditeurs et les trois manuscrits», *Orientalia* 58 (1989) 510-524; A. DE VOGÜÉ, «Le texte copte du chapitre XVIII de l'Histoire Lausiaque. L'édition d'Amélineau et le manuscrit», *Orientalia* 61 (1992) 459-462. The result is that there is no published Coptic text that corresponds to these translations and thus the task of checking the translation against the Coptic text is rendered virtually Herculean.

The manuscripts in question are Vat. Copt. 59, 62, 64 and 69. They are all in the Bohairic dialect (a fact not mentioned in this volume), which means that they are all relatively late (10th century) although they could be based on an earlier Sahidic version (Zoega mentions fragments of a Sahidic HL) or Greek manuscripts (less likely). There are no known Bohairic literary manuscripts prior to the ninth century (see L.-Th. LEFORT, «Littérature bohaïrique», *Le Muséon* 44 (1931) 115-135 and A. SHISHA-HALEVY, «Bohairic», in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, ed. A. Atiya, New York 1991, 53-60. Lefort held that Bohairic literature was produced largely in the ninth century after the last destruction of the library of the monastery of Saint Macarius. It is therefore doubtful whether the translations contained in these manuscripts should be described as a «très ancienne». These manuscripts were obtained from the monastery of Abu Makar in the Wadi 'n Natrûn and brought to the Vatican by Assemani in 1715. Zoega already pointed out that the items in these volumes are arranged in no order whatsoever. White hypothesized that they constitute «the disordered remains of a great Lectionary» (H.G. EVELYN WHITE, *The Monasteries of the Wadi 'n Natrûn. 1. New Coptic Texts from the Monastery of Saint Macarius*, New York 1926, xxxii-xxxiii; this item is missing from the bibliography of Bunge-Vogüé) that were gathered together and rebound (possibly in the early 17th century) without regard for the proper sequence of the contents, while damaged leaves and even volumes may have been discarded. In any case, the material contained in these volumes should probably not be described as a «synaxaire» (See R.G. COQUIN, «Le synaxaire des coptes, un nouveau témoin de la recension de Haute Égypte», *Analecta Bollandiana* 96 (1978), 351, n.2).

The «Lettre-Préface et Prologue», the *Vie de Pambô*, and the *Vie d'Évagre* are from Vat. Copt. 64.7, dated to the tenth century according to the catalogue (see A. HEBBELYNCK - A. VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Codices Coptici Vaticani Barberiniani Borgiani Rossiani. 1. Codices Vaticani*, Roma 1937, 465-466; this item is missing from the bibliography of Bunge-Vogüé). Given the heterogeneous character of these volumes, it is best to indicate the particular piece by the precise catalogue designation. The presence of these pieces in the collection shows, however, that whether or not there existed the hypothetical early work by Palladius, there was a copy of the HL in circulation from which these pieces were taken.

The question of manuscript designation becomes more critical with regard to the *Vie de Macaire d'Égypte* and it would have been helpful in finding one's way through this labyrinth if they had been used consistently since there is more

than one piece in two of the manuscripts claiming to be the Life of Macarius. In the codices mentioned above there are in fact five pieces claiming to be the Life of Macarius. Two of these, Vat. Copt. 59.6 (ff. 96-136v) and 62.1 (ff. 1-37v) give the author as Sarapion of Thmuis. A third (64.1 ff.1-32) with a mutilated first page probably contained the same attribution. Amélineau claimed to have used these three for his edition of the *Vie de Macaire de Scété* (AMÉLINEAU, *Histoire des monastères de la Basse-Egypte*, 46). Two others (Vat. Copt. 64.6 ff. [135v-155v] and 59.8 [ff. 150-167v]) claim to contain the lives of Macarius the Egyptian (or the Great) and of Macarius of Alexandria. The latter is missing from both. Keeping in mind the nature of these codices, it is possible that they did once contain the lives of Macarius of Alexandria. In fact the Life of Macarius of Alexandria is found now in these codices only in Vat. Copt. 69.4 (ff. 67-84v) which was published by Amélineau (AMÉLINEAU, *Histoire des monastères de la Basse-Egypte*, 235-261). The attribution and the content of the life attributed to Sarapion have been discussed by H.G. EVELYN WHITE, *The Monasteries of the Wadi 'n Natrûn. Part II: The History of the Monasteries of Nitria and of Scetis*, ed. Walter Hauser, New York 1932, 61, 465-468 (Appendix III). White concluded on the basis of mistakes, omissions and anachronisms as well as contents that the Life was a late work, an encomium intended for liturgical use, written before 784 when the relics of Macarius were translated to Elmi. White also identified and published (H.G. EVELYN WHITE, *The Monasteries of the Wadi 'n Natrûn. I. New Coptic Texts from the Monastery of Saint Macarius*, 124-126) two leaves, one found by Tischendorf and the other by himself at Abu Makar, as belonging to the other Life contained in Vat. Copt. 59.8 but did not collate them with the Vatican manuscript (which was being edited contemporaneously by Chaîne). He did identify this as an excerpt from the HL.

Chaîne claimed that both Zoega and Amélineau had failed to identify the fragments of the HL in these manuscripts. He even suggested that Amélineau's failure to do so was because it would have run contrary to his favorite theories. Chaîne identified as fragments belonging to the double recension of the HL: a long recension represented by Vat. Copt. 59.8 (ff. 150r-163r) and 64.6 (ff.132v-148v) and a short recension represented by Vat. Copt. 59.6 (ff. 121-133). The latter is in fact part of the Life attributed to Sarapion of Thmuis and is part of one of the manuscripts that Amélineau explicitly said that he used. The other two manuscripts (the long recension) belong to the other Life of Macarius not attributed to Sarapion. Chaîne seems to have assumed that the short version also was not part of the Life attributed to Sarapion for he noted that five folios

are missing between Vat. Copt. 59.6 ff. 120v and 121v and so he attributed what followed to an untitled composition for liturgical purposes. In view of the history of these manuscripts, that is not necessarily the case and we see no good reason not to regard it as part of the Life attributed to Sarapion, in which case it would not be quite correct to refer to it as a «short recension». Rather the author would have used, along with many other traditions attached to Macarius, material stemming from the HL or the hypothetical first work of Palladius. Chaine, on the other hand, assumed that both versions had been produced by the same author. He then edited what he called the long recension contained in 59.8 and 64.6. He did not, however, edit or translate the account of the death of Macarius, which is found also in Amélineau's edition of the Life attributed to Sarapion (what C. called the «short recension»). Vogüé, in addition to offering extensive lists of corrections to both the editions of Amélineau and Chaine, has also edited the section on the death of Macarius found in the other Life from 59.8 and 64.6 that was not edited by Chaine, while admitting that this material is «non-Palladienne». Given all that has been said here, it seems to me that a word of caution is in order and that further work needs to be done in analysing the contents of these two Bohairic lives, their relation to one another, and the way they used their sources before one can confidently use them as a source for the transmission of a text coming from the pen of Palladius («sans doute peints par Pallade», p. 9). It would also be interesting to know the relationship of the Sahidic fragments to the Greek text of the HL.

THE MODERN HISTORIOGRAPHY OF EARLY EGYPTIAN MONASTICISM¹

Monasticism appears as a recognizable movement, as a new phenomenon, in the first half of the fourth century. By the time of the death of Pachomius in 347 and of Antony in 356, many thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, of people had taken up this new form of Christian life in Egypt. The ancient Christian historians beginning with Rufinus, and following in the tradition established by Eusebius, saw this new development in a theological light as a response to a divine call and further evidence of God's activity in history.² The miracles and wonders reported among the early monks served to confirm this interpretation.

With the emergence of modern critical historical writing such explanations no longer seemed sufficient nor did they answer the questions the historian tended to ask. The modern historian tends to look for explanations that are less theological and more rooted in an objective assessment of the available evidence. Despite all efforts, however, at objectivity, it has proven difficult, indeed, impossible to suppress the subjective element in the writing of history. Many studies in the past century have sought to analyze the subjective and hermeneutical aspect of the historical enterprise.³ All historians, whether ancient or modern, remain very human and limited by their own historical perspective. Works of history, no less than other literary productions, often reveal - at least to the attentive reader - as much or more about the frame of mind of the writer than they do about the ostensible subject. This is no less true in the field of monastic history than in other branches of history. Writers are inevitably affected by their emotional preferences as well as by the prevailing ethos, the reigning ideas and what is now known as the politically correct stance or attitude.

1 Published originally in: *Il Monachesimo tra Eredità e Aperture. Atti del simposio «Testi e temi nella tradizione del monachesimo cristiano» per il 50° anniversario dell'Istituto Monastico di Sant'Anselmo* (SA 140), ed. M. Bielawski - D. Hombergen, Roma 2004, 197-220.

2 The principal study of Rufinus' work is: F. THÉLAMON, *Païens et Chrétiens au IV^e siècle: L'apport de l'«Histoire ecclésiastique» de Rufin d'Aquilée* (Études Augustiniennes), Paris 1981; see also: G.F. CHESNUT, *The First Christian Historians: Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret and Evagrius* (Théologique Historique 46), Paris 1977.

3 See for example, H.-I. MARROU, *De la connaissance historique*, Paris 1954.

I would like to begin the more specific consideration of this complex topic by citing a recent publication of a distinguished scholar of late antique Egypt, R.S. Bagnall, who in turn is citing Peter Brown: «The very fact that modern Europe and America grew out of the Christian world that replaced the Roman Empire in the Middle Ages has ensured that, even today, these notions [«of sexual renunciation, of continence, celibacy, and the virgin life»] still crowd in upon us, as pale forbidding presences».⁴ Bagnall continues: «The renunciation of sexual activity is certainly a subject unlikely to find anyone without an opinion. But the heritage of monasticism interferes in more ways than that obvious one. Western ideas of monastic life are largely formed – whether favorably or not – by the western cenobitic traditions, particularly Benedictine, and it is by no means easy to shake off the spell of this imagined world. The western monastic tradition owes much to Egypt, but it must not be confused with it».⁵ Bagnall's observation serves to highlight two aspects of historiography: the preconceptions or prejudices of the historian and his point of view. The temptations of the historian are very great, and without a careful intellectual asceticism, including reflection upon his own point of view, his values, his categories of interpretation, and the limits of his knowledge, he is more than likely to fall prey to the temptation to sit in imperious judgment on the past. The power of the historian is also very great, for he fashions icons of the past that become part of the identity of later generations. Even the adjectives he selects (as in the case of Brown) have power to influence the attitudes of his readers.

The concept of history has a long and complex history itself.⁶ New evidence as well as changing points of view and new interpretative categories require that history be constantly rewritten. In the sketch that follows attention will be paid to the evidence that historical writers had at their disposition and to their points of view and interpretations of that evidence. The modern historiography of ancient Egyptian monasticism really begins with the work of Le Nain de Tillemont.⁷ Although Baronius is often recognized as the founder of modern

4 P. BROWN, *The Body and Society. Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, London 1988, 446.

5 R.S. BAGNALL, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, Princeton 1993, 294.

6 See for example, E. BREISACH, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval and Modern*, Chicago 1994; R. KOSELLECK, «Geschichte, Historie», in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* 2, Stuttgart 1979, 593-717.

7 For information regarding Tillemont, see: H. LECLERCQ, «Tillemont», in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* 15, Paris 1953, 2313; *idem*, «Historiens du Christianisme», in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* 6, Paris 1924, 2533-2735;

church history, he devoted little attention to the early monastic movement. His work was organized in the form of annals and did not include a really critical examination of the sources. Sebastien Le Nain de Tillemont (1637-1698), a contemporary of two other great pioneers in the development of critical historical methodology, Jean Mabillon⁸ and Richard Simon,⁹ shared with them a critical¹⁰ spirit and a devotion to the Christian faith.¹¹ He is known particularly for two great works, which served as mines of information for later historians; the first entitled: *l'Histoire des empereurs et des autres princes, qui ont régné durant les six premiers siècles de l'Église, des persecutions qu'ils ont faites aux chrétiens, de leur guerres contre les juifs, des écrivains profanes, et des personnes illustres de leur temps; justifiée par les citations des auteurs originaux, avec des notes pour éclaircir les principales difficultéz de l'Histoire*, was published in six volumes from 1690 – 1738.¹² The second, entitled *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique des six premiers siècles, justifiés par les citations des auteurs originaux, avec une chronologie, où l'on fait un abrégé de l'histoire ecclésiastique et profane et des notes pour éclaircir les difficultéz des faits et de la chronologie*, appeared in sixteen volumes from 1693 to 1712.¹³

As might be guessed from the similarity of the titles, the two works were originally conceived as one. When his work was already well advanced, Tillemont's friends urged him to start publishing, but the ecclesiastical censor made objections to observations in the first volume such as «perhaps there was neither an ox nor an ass in the stable where our Savior was born» and that the

G. BARDY, «Tillemont», in *Dictionnaire de la Théologie Catholique* 15, Paris 1946, 1029-1033.

8 H. LECLERCQ, «Mabillon», in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* 10, Paris 1931, 427-724.

9 J. LE BRUN, «Simon (Richard)», in *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible* 12, Paris 1996, 1353-1383.

10 For the development of the concept «critical», see: K. RÖTTGERS, «Kritik», in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe; historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* 3, Stuttgart 1979, 651-675.

11 The principal source of the following information about Tillemont is: H. LECLERCQ, «Historiens du Christianisme», in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, Paris 1924, 6:2624-2638.

12 L.-S. LE NAIN DE TILLEMONT, *Histoire des empereurs, et des autres princes qui ont regné durant les six premiers siècles de l'Eglise*, Paris 2 1700-1728.

13 The work was published twice in Paris and then in Venice: L.-S. LE NAIN DE TILLEMONT, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique des six premiers siècles* 1-16, Venice 1732.

Magi did not arrive apparently until after the Purification. Tillemont, though known for his humility and modesty, was unwilling to cede to the demands of the censor on the grounds that one cannot constrain a historian in such matters nor oblige him to remain silent with regard to what seems to him most likely. Therefore he withdrew his work, but continued his research. His friends, however, counseled him to divide the work into two, one dedicated to the emperors and the other to the church, since the first, being profane history, would not be subject to ecclesiastical censorship. This he did and the publication began in 1690. Meanwhile a new censor was appointed, with the result that the *Mémoires* began to be published also beginning in 1693. The seventh volume, published after Tillemont's death in 1698, contains material regarding lives of saints who died between 328 and 375 and the origins of the solitaries and cenobites. Volumes 8-11 contain much additional material about early eastern and western monasticism in the fourth century.

Tillemont's goal was to study the history of the church and of the saints – and incidentally the history of the princes and powerful involved in that history – from the point of view of the sources and to search for the truth in the original texts disengaged from later interpretations. On each point he composed a continuous text incorporating what could be learned from each author, scrupulously distinguishing what the ancient author said from his own affirmations. Such a work could hardly appeal to a broad public, but has proved a mine of information to later historians including Gibbon, Duchesne and Schiwietz. Others, as we shall see, have ignored it at their own risk. Tillemont's careful evaluations of authors and analyses of texts are still worth reading today.

To give but one example, his interpretation of the ancient texts regarding the location of Nitria and Scetis proved more exact than the speculations of Amélineau and Butler two centuries later, when much better maps had become available and it was possible to travel there more easily. Tillemont perceived clearly that Sozomen was in error in identifying Nitria and Scetis.¹⁴ Butler, on the other hand, although acquainted with Tillemont's work, was confused by the term Wadi Natrun, which he identified with Nitria. This led him to place Scetis to the northwest of Nitria and Cellia.¹⁵ Even White, although having no doubts about

14 TILLEMONT, *Mémoires* 8, 806, Notes sur Saint Macaire d'Egypte 2.

15 C. BUTLER, *The Lausiac History of Palladius* 2 (Texts and Studies 6), Cambridge 1898-1904, 189. E. AMÉLINEAU, *La géographie de l'Egypte à l'époque copte*, Paris 1893/1973, 447, held that the northern side of the valley was Nitria and the southern Scete, a view

the location of Scetis, regarded Sozomen's use of the name Scetis as «wide» rather than simply mistaken.¹⁶

Tillemont's sources were limited principally to Greek and Latin texts, although he did have some translations of other works, for example, the letters of Antony in the Latin translation of Champerius (de Sarasio) from the Arabic by Abraham Ecchellensis. Relying on Jerome's testimony, Tillemont accepted the letters as genuine, though he noted that the Latin was practically unintelligible in many places. About the other pieces attributed to Antony by Ecchellenis or others, he expressed considerable reserve in his understated way, noting in some cases blatant anachronisms. Tillemont's discussion does not figure in the bibliography of the most recent study of the Letters of Antony by Rubenson,¹⁷ surely a lacuna from the point of view of the critical history of their transmission.

Tillemont was limited, however (to judge by the our contemporary standards), by not having at his disposal any of the Coptic literature of early monasticism nor the documentary and archaeological evidence that has accumulated in the intervening centuries. His organization of the material according to the lives of saints (and their dates of death), due perhaps to the influence of ancient authors as well as the efforts of the Bollandists, did not allow for an integrated picture of a particular period. Thus, to find the material relating to the second half of the fourth century, one has to consult several different volumes. But of course, from his point of view, he was only writing «mémoires» for the future writing of the history. Occasionally, the organization according to the dates of death of saints broke down, as in the case of Theophilus, the late fourth century archbishop of Alexandria, whom he could not regard as a saint, yet whose activity required extensive treatment.

Tillemont's «Mémoires» served as a principal source of information for the 18th century English historian Edward Gibbon, whose forceful rhetorical style and clear concept of the «Decline and Fall» of the Roman Empire were to exert great influence on succeeding centuries. Although Gibbon admired Tillemont and praised him as «an incomparable guide whose bigotry is overbalanced by the merits of erudition, diligence, veracity and scrupulous minuteness», he

apparently based on the confusion between the valley of Nitria and the valley Wadi Natrun.

16 H.G. EVELYN WHITE, *The Monasteries of the Wadi 'n Natrîn 2. The History of the Monasteries of Nitria and of Scetis*, ed. W. Hauser, New York 1932, 30.

17 S. RUBENSON, *The Letters of St. Antony. Origenist Theology, Monastic Tradition and the Making of a Saint* (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity), Minneapolis 1995.

failed to imitate those virtues when it came time to write about monasticism in the late Roman Empire. One of the most important chapters in his work is dedicated to the rise of monasticism and the conversion of the barbarians.¹⁸ He describes the monks as a destructive force that contributed much to the decline and fall. The Ascetics «were inspired by the savage enthusiasm, which represents man as a criminal, and God as a tyrant».¹⁹ Gibbon of course does not provide the detailed analysis of Tillemont, but he does go over the main stages of monastic development beginning with Antony, whose story he introduces with the sentence: «Egypt, the fruitful parent of superstition, afforded the first example of the monastic life».²⁰ Citing Tillemont's arguments, he admits that Antony could probably read and write Coptic, but relying on Sicard instead of Tillemont, he confused Nitria and Scetis.²¹ Although Gibbon mentions many of the principal figures of the monastic movement including Pachomius, Hilarion, Basil, Martin, his characterizations are implacably hostile. «These unhappy exiles from social life were impelled by the dark and implacable genius of superstition».²² «The freedom of the mind, the source of every generous and rational sentiment, was destroyed by the habits of credulity and submission; and the monk, contracting the vices of a slave, devoutly followed the faith and passions of his ecclesiastical tyrant».²³ «The aspect of a genuine anachoret was horrid and disgusting: every sensation that is offensive to man was thought acceptable to God».²⁴ «Pleasure and guilt are synonymous terms in the language of the monks».²⁵ «The monastic studies have tended, for the most part, to darken, rather than to dispel, the cloud of superstition. Yet the curiosity or zeal of some learned solitaries has cultivated the ecclesiastical, and even the profane, sciences: and posterity must gratefully acknowledge, that the monuments of Greek and Roman literature have been preserved and multiplied by their indefatigable

18 E. GIBBON, «Chapter XXXVII - Origin, progress and effects of the monastic life», in *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* 4, London 1848, 390-413. On Gibbon's attitude toward Christianity, see: W.H.C. FRENCH, «Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) and Early Christianity», *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 45 (1994) 661-672.

19 GIBBON, *The History of the Decline and Fall*, 391.

20 GIBBON, *The History of the Decline and Fall*, 392.

21 GIBBON, *The History of the Decline and Fall*, 392-393.

22 GIBBON, *The History of the Decline and Fall*, 397.

23 GIBBON, *The History of the Decline and Fall*, 401.

24 GIBBON, *The History of the Decline and Fall*, 402.

25 GIBBON, *The History of the Decline and Fall*, 402

pens».²⁶ For this last point Gibbon cites Jean Mabillon and John Cassian in a note, acknowledging that books were copied even in monasteries in Egypt. After that lapse from polemic, Gibbon goes on to assert that «The lives of the primitive monks were consumed in penance and solitude: undisturbed by the various occupations which fill the time, and exercise the faculties, of reasonable, active, and social beings».²⁷ Distinctions of time and place collapse at before the rhetorical power of Gibbon's pen, as when he states: «A cruel unfeeling temper has distinguished the monks of every age and country: their stern indifference, which is seldom mollified by personal friendship, is inflamed by religious hatred; and their merciless zeal has strenuously administered the holy office of the Inquisition».²⁸ As part of his concluding peroration, Gibbon characterizes the monastic lives of saints (referring to the *Vitae Patrum*)²⁹: «These extravagant tales, which display the fiction, without the genius of poetry, have seriously affected the reason, the faith, and the morals, of the Christians. Their credulity debased and vitiated the faculties of the mind; they corrupted the evidence of history; and superstition gradually extinguished the hostile light of philosophy and science».³⁰ Apart from sheer polemic, Gibbon was also highly selective in marshaling his evidence. Had he read more carefully and less emotionally, he would have noticed that Pachomius and Antony would have agreed with him in regard to the veneration of relics, and Cassian with regard to the utility of miracles in general in the spiritual life. Ironically, according to Gibbon, the monks responsible for contributing so substantially to the decline and fall of the empire were also the ones responsible for preserving the classics of ancient literature that contributed to the Renaissance.

Despite the highly colored nature of this characterization of monasticism, its influence can be felt even today. Gibbon succeeded in producing a picture of the ancient world that associated monasticism with the concept of «decline and fall».³¹ More recent scholarship has suggested that this concept should be abandoned altogether, since it is grossly misleading as a description of the complex

26 GIBBON, *The History of the Decline and Fall*, 405

27 GIBBON, *The History of the Decline and Fall*, 407.

28 GIBBON, *The History of the Decline and Fall*, 412.

29 H. ROSWEYD, *Vitae Patrum*, Antwerp 1615.

30 ROSWEYD, *Vitae Patrum*, 413.

31 On the later career of this notion, see: A. MOMIGLIANO, «Christianity and the Decline of the Roman Empire», in *Terzo Contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico*, Roma 1966, 69-86.

social and cultural reality of what is now commonly called «Late Antiquity».³² Although the category of «decline and fall» has been largely abandoned in favor of «continuity» and «transformation», the hostility toward monasticism that accompanied it, has survived, as we shall note later.

From the point of view of critical evaluation and use of the sources, the next important work on early monasticism was that of Schiwietz, published two hundred years after that of Tillemont.³³ It is a sign of increased awareness of continuity that Schiwietz begins his work with a chapter on the pre-history of monasticism in the first three centuries, concluding with a brief comparison of Christian asceticism with contemporary pagan forms of asceticism. The second part of the first volume (about 175 pages) is devoted to the story of the eremitical life beginning with Paul the Hermit and then to the story of cenobitic life centered on Pachomius. A comparison of the treatment of Paul the Hermit by Tillemont and Schiwietz, who knew the volumes of Tillemont well, may serve to illustrate the changes in point of view that have occurred. Tillemont does not of course deny the historicity of Paul, but simply regards him as irrelevant, since he had no historical consequences as Antony did through his numerous disciples and widespread fame. Schiwietz feels called upon to defend the historicity of Paul, although he has to admit that it is very difficult to separate the historical material from the fictional in Jerome's *Vita Pauli*.³⁴ Whereas Tillemont had treated the *Vita Antonii* as a source for historical material, offered a summary of the main points and referred the reader to the life for more details, Schiwietz found it necessary to engage in a lengthy defense of the authenticity of the work, chiefly against Weingarten, who had placed the beginnings of monasticism in the period after Constantine. However, Schiwietz also treats the *Vita Antonii* basically as a source of information without analyzing the literary genre involved, a task that has been accomplished more recently.³⁵

32 See for example, A. CAMERON, *The Later Roman Empire: AD 284-430*, Cambridge, Mass. 1993, and *eadem*, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity: AD 395-600*, London-New York 1993, 4-5, who suggests that the category of «decline» should be abandoned completely. As she notes, the work by A.H.M. JONES, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602. A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey 1-2*, Norman, Okla. 1964, contributed significantly to the change of perspective.

33 S. SCHIWIEZ, *Das morgenländische Mönchtum 1-3*, Mainz/Kirchheim 1904-1913.

34 SCHIWIEZ, *Das morgenländische Mönchtum 1*, 50. He also criticises Amélineau for the hypothesis that Jerome used a Coptic life of Paul.

35 See the analysis of Bartelink in ATHANASE D'ALEXANDRIE, *Vie d'Antoine* (Source Chrétienne 400), ed. G.J.M. Bartelink, Paris 1994, 62-67 and A. DE VOGÜÉ, *Histoire littéraire*

The *Historia Lausiaca* and the *Historia Monachorum* are treated in much the same way after a brief defense of their reliability against Weingarten. Schiwietz does not seem to have known Butler's study that appeared a few years previous to his own.³⁶ He devotes space to individual ascetics such as Amun, the two Macarii, Evagrius Ponticus, as Tillemont had done, but organizes the material in a more integrated way based on localities rather than dates of death. Then Schiwietz moves on to the history of the Pachomian monasteries to which he devotes a great deal of space, going into the details of the organization of the communities, including the reception of new recruits, common prayer, work, food and fasting, clothing, etc. Most of this is based on the Pachomian rules, since the Coptic lives were not yet available.³⁷ A third section (chiefly a defense of late fourth century monasticism against the charges of degeneracy by nineteenth century German authors) is devoted to a more general assessment of Egyptian monasticism in the fourth century.

If one were writing a review of this work as if it had appeared in 2002 (an anachronistic exercise of course, but useful for illustrating how much our mentality differs from that of a century ago), one would have to point out the following shortcomings. The literary sources are used without sufficient regard for genre and style. The archaeological and documentary evidence is missing. Not much use is made of the Coptic sources (most were not yet published). And there is little social analysis (sociological analysis as an instrument for historical writing had not yet been developed). The work does not show much interest in intellectual history nor in the spiritual content of the sources used. Although the organization of the work is more reader-friendly than that of Tillemont, it does not really advance the critical discussion much beyond Tillemont.

This «criticism» from our present perspective should not be taken to imply that our contemporary point of view always represents progress in understanding the past. A comparison of the analyses of a particular episode in early monastic history, the Origenist controversy of the year 400, by writers over the last three hundred years may serve to illustrate some of the changes that have taken place in historical perspective. In his eleventh volume Tillemont dealt with this controversy at considerable length in a chapter dedicated to Theophilus, the Tall

du mouvement monastique dans l'Antiquité. 1. Le monachisme latin de la mort d'Antoine à la fin du séjour de Jérôme à Rome (356-385) (Patrimoine christianisme), Paris 1991, 17-80.

36 C. BUTLER, *The Lausiaca History of Palladius* 1-2 (Texts and Studies 5-6), Cambridge 1898-1904.

37 SCHIWIEZ, *Das morgenländische Mönchtum* 1, 148-224.

Brothers and Isidore. He began by noting the difficulty of dealing with the subject because all of the ancient authors had been accused of partiality and noted that: «Saint Jerome and Saint Epiphanius, although saints, had shown a great deal of hostility toward all those who were not enemies» of Origen. Although he continues to cite Jerome and Epiphanius throughout his treatment of the subject, because, as he says, «of their authority»,³⁸ Tillemont makes it clear that he places much greater trust in the testimony of Palladius. He notes that the principal point in Palladius' narrative was that the persecution of Chrysostom by Theophilus was actually the result of the unjust hatred that Theophilus had conceived for Isidore. Then he cites the independent testimony of Isidore of Pelusium regarding Theophilus, observing that Isidore even enjoyed the esteem of Cyril, the nephew and successor of Theophilus.³⁹ Tillemont goes on to lay out in great detail the whole story of the Tall Brothers, the character of Theophilus, the question of Origenism previous to the year 399, citing and evaluating all the known evidence. The crucial point in the story is the volte-face of Theophilus in regard to Isidore the Hospitaler because the latter had prevented Theophilus from getting his hands on money destined for the poor. This led in turn to the intercession of the Tall Brothers on behalf of Isidore and the subsequent action of Theophilus against the Tall Brothers, the consequences of which stretch all the way to the condemnation and exile of John Chrysostom. Again Tillemont cites the independent testimony of Isidore of Pelusium in confirmation of Theophilus' well-known mania for money and building. Tillemont was well aware of Jerome's *Letter* 133 (written in 415, fifteen years after the controversy of 415) in which Jerome claimed that Evagrius, Or, Isidore and many others had been condemned by the bishops as Origenists, and in deference to the authority of Jerome, he notes that «if the authority of Saint Jerome obliges us to say that one and the other had been condemned by the bishops in Egypt», it must have been by a later council than the one that condemned the Tall Brothers.⁴⁰ Although, for reasons of what might be called ecclesiastical prudence or diplomacy, Tillemont never states it bluntly, it is clear that he did not set much store by the testimony of Jerome nor did he regard the question of Origenism as the really determining factor in the whole sad history, a history determined more by personal animosities than by genuine theological questions.

38 TILLEMONT, *Mémoires*, 11: 471-472.

39 TILLEMONT, *Mémoires*, 11, 443.

40 Tillemont's reference is to Jerome's *Epist.* 133,3 (CSEL 56).

Two hundred years later Schiwietz reached the same conclusions, or rather he accepted the conclusions of Tillemont, for he cites the *Mémoires* and the authors that Tillemont had assembled. Actually, Schiwietz' treatment of the question is not really a genuine re-examination of all the evidence.⁴¹ It is much less detailed than that of Tillemont. One notable difference is that he no longer found it necessary to show deference to the authority of Jerome, whom he does not even cite.

About ninety years after Schiwietz and three hundred years after Tillemont, Elizabeth Clark has examined the question again in considerable detail.⁴² The results are dramatically different. One cannot fail to note that neither Schiwietz nor Tillemont appear in her bibliography. Clark is of course well aware that all the principal ancient sources (Socrates, Sozomen and Palladius), as she says, «systematically downplay the theological issues involved by blaming the controversy entirely on Theophilus of Alexandria's dubious behavior». Yet she is convinced that «deeper theological issues» were involved and she argues, «the theology of Evagrius of Pontus is central to the controversy».⁴³ Although she admits that none of the contemporary sources even mention Evagrius, and the earliest reference to him in the context of Origenism occurs fifteen years after the events of 400, her entire book is dedicated to showing that in reality his theology was central to the dispute. Given the general tendency of modern historians to play down theological disputes and to emphasis social and economic aspects of history, this interpretation seems at first sight surprising. What has happened in the intervening period to account for this change? I suggest that there are two factors involved: the first is the rediscovery of the works of Evagrius and the interpretations of them that have been offered, especially by Antoine Guillaumont; the second is the invisible presence of Walter Bauer. The interpretation of Evagrius' works has been a subject of controversy, especially since the publication of Guillaumont's work on the *Kephalaia Gnostica* and the history of Origenism among the Greeks and Syrians.⁴⁴ There is no doubt that Evagrius' writings figured in the condemnations of the sixth century, but that does not justify the assumption that they were at the center of the dispute 150

41 SCHIWIEZ, *Das morgenländische Mönchtum* 2, 332-338.

42 E.A. CLARK, *The Origenist Controversy. The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, Princeton 1992, 287.

43 CLARK, *The Origenist Controversy*, 44.

44 A. GUILLAUMONT, *Les «Kephalaia Gnostica» d'Evagre le Pontique et l'histoire de l'origénisme chez les Grecs et les Syriens*, Paris 1962.

years earlier.⁴⁵ More important, however, are the heterodox interpretations that have been given to Evagrius' works. Clark offers a number of such «gnosticizing» interpretations and dismisses the orthodox interpretation of Evagrius by others such as Bunge as «unconvincing».⁴⁶ Particularly interesting from a historiographical point of view is Clark's use of a little work by Shenoute, given the title *Contra Origenistas* by the editor, Tito Orlandi.⁴⁷ Clark makes much of this work together with a mention of «the pest Origen» in a letter of Dioscorus, suggesting that in it «we find a mix of Origenism and Gnosticising motifs that resurrects the question posed earlier by the association of the Nag Hammadi documents with Pachomian monasticism: how close was the relationship between orthodox and heterodox forms of Christianity in the Egyptian desert during the fourth and fifth centuries?» Suggesting that Evagrius was influenced by Gnosticism, Clark continues: «we can see that an Evagrian-type Origenism had meshed with a Gnosticising cosmological speculation that Shenoute claims was derived from "apocryphal books"».⁴⁸ She also notes «Many of the points he assails are ones found earlier in the anti-Origenist polemics of Epiphanius, Theophilus, and Jerome».⁴⁹ Then she concludes: «That Shenoute's treatise *Against the Origenists* reveals a type of Origenist theology associated especially with Evagrius seems clear».⁵⁰ She insists that, for Shenoute, «the Gnosticising variation of Origenism, that was an exotic development of Evagrian theology stands at the center of his polemic against those disturbing his flock».⁵¹

All of these points are highly dubious. It is not surprising that Shenoute's «points» are found in the polemics of Epiphanius and Theophilus, because the latter actually seem to be his sources. In fact the treatise includes a lengthy quotation (and perhaps the entire document) from the Theophilus' festal letter of 401, omitted by the editor from the edition for reasons that he explains. Although the treatise may indeed shed light on the conditions in Upper Egypt in the second

45 For a recent careful evaluation of all the evidence relating to the sixth-century controversy and the role of Evagrius' writings in it, see: D. HOMBERGEN, *The Second Origenist Controversy. A New Perspective on Cyril of Scythopolis' Monastic Biographies as Historical Sources for Sixth-Century Origenism* (SA 132), Roma 2001.

46 CLARK, *The Origenist Controversy*, 65-68, 152.

47 T. ORLANDI, *Shenute contra Origenistas. Testo con introduzione e traduzione*, Roma 1985.

48 CLARK, *The Origenist Controversy*, 152.

49 CLARK, *The Origenist Controversy*, 153.

50 CLARK, *The Origenist Controversy*, 157.

51 CLARK, *The Origenist Controversy*, 158.

quarter of the fifth century, it is far from evident that it sheds light on the events of 400.⁵² The association of Origenism, Gnosticism and monasticism in general, whether Evagrian or Pachomian, is equally doubtful. Although there have been vigorous efforts to associate the Nag Hammadi library with the Pachomian monasteries for the past twenty-five years, there is no clear evidence for this other than geographical proximity and there are better hypotheses available to account for the provenance of this very heterogeneous collection of writings. The one scrap (literally) of evidence that seemed to point toward a Pachomian monastery, a fragment of papyrus from the covers of the codices, has most recently been explained plausibly by Wipszicka as the result of the used paper trade.⁵³

Clark admits that her approach is partisan, that she is attempting «to raise up for consideration a defeated theology that for a few years stirred the Christian world to new intellectual creativity».⁵⁴ However, the association of Gnosticism of the type represented in the Nag Hammadi documents with Origenism and with Pachomian monasticism creates the impression of a freethinking syncretistic mentality difficult to reconcile with what is really known of the monastic world of the fourth century. The answer to such a criticism is generally that the monastic literary sources have been censored. This of course is a circular argument, one which owes much to the interpretative hypothesis of Walter Bauer according to whom there was in the beginning no orthodoxy, only heterodoxy.⁵⁵ Extensive documentation has been brought forward to show that this was not the case in Egypt.⁵⁶ Undoubtedly the orthodoxy of the late fourth

52 S. EMMEL, *Shenoute's Literary Corpus* (CSCO 600), Louvain 2004, 646-648. Emmel refers to the work by the incipit «I am amazed». The title given to it by Orlandi, «*Shenute contra Origenistas*», is somewhat misleading, because Shenoute's polemic is not limited to Origenists, but embraces a wide range of opponents including Nestorius whose second letter to Cyril he cites, which means the work must be dated after 431.

53 E. WIPSYCKA, «The Nag Hammadi Library and the Monks: A Papyrologist's Point of View», *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 30 (2000) 179-191. A thorough discussion of the question can be found in: A. KHOSROYEV, *Die Bibliothek von Nag Hammadi. Einige Probleme des Christentums in Ägypten während der ersten Jahrhunderte* (Arbeiten zum spätantiken und koptischen Ägypten 7), Altenberge 1995.

54 CLARK, *The Origenist Controversy*, 10.

55 W. BAUER, *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum* (Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 10), Tübingen 1934). An English translation, evidence of the enduring influence of the work, has recently been published: W. BAUER, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, Mifflintown, Pa. 1996.

56 See especially: C.H. ROBERTS, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt*, London 1979, and A. LE BOULLUEC, *La notion d'hérésie dans la littérature grecque, IIe-IIIe s.* 1-2 (Études Augustiniennes), Paris 1985-1986, 11-20.

century was more restricted than that of the period of Origen, as Clark and others have observed, and for this very reason it is even more difficult to imagine Evagrius and the Pachomian monks reading and being influenced by treatises such as those found in the Nag Hammadi collection than it would be to imagine Origen himself reading them.

To return to the question of the causes of the Origenist controversy, it must be said that the more recent contributions have not added greatly to clarify the subject and in some cases the effects have been confused with the causes. There were undoubtedly negative effects in the intellectual world of the church in late antiquity, particularly as a result of the second Origenist controversy of the sixth century, but that does not mean that the original causes were not predominantly certain personalities, Epiphanius and Theophilus in particular, as Tillemont perceived.

The assumptions of the Bauer hypothesis have had wide-ranging effects on research and raise important methodological questions for the historian.⁵⁷ I would like to mention one of these in particular. In a recent article H. Holze has suggested that the use of the word *anapausis* in early monastic sources reflects Gnostic influence.⁵⁸ The word is indeed found in the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Evangelium Veritatis* as well of course as in the New Testament. The author assumes that the Nag Hammadi library comes from a Pachomian monastery and concludes that the use of the word *anapausis* in earlier monastic writings – he relies on citations from the *Apophthegmata* – is due to Gnostic rather than New Testament influence. He concludes by noting that his investigation of *anapausis* in early monasticism illustrates the broader thesis of W. Bauer that Egyptian Christianity was originally heterodox and was only gradually integrated into the ecclesiastical structure through the efforts of the Alexandrian hierarchy. This tendency (heterodoxy) would have lasted longer in the monastic movement.

This raises the complex question of the sources of monastic spiritual terminology (and spiritual theology), which has not yet received sufficient attention. Forty years ago J. Leipoldt asserted that early Christian asceticism derives essentially from the influence of Greek philosophy.⁵⁹ Among such essential features

57 Regarding the influence of Bauer, see also the essay «The Concept “Critical”» in this volume, 479-496.

58 H. HOLZE, «Anapausis im anachoretischen Mönchtum und in der Gnosis», *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 106 (1995) 1-17.

59 J. LEIPOLDT, *Griechische Philosophie und frühchristliche Askese*, Berlin 1961, 1-67.

he would include the very idea of ascesis, the notion of voluntary poverty, the sharing of goods (Jamblicus) and the quest for inner freedom. Celibacy and the eremitical life also appear in philosophical writings. Leipoldt also noted the influence of the Greek philosophic ascetical ideal on Philo, and maintained that by 200 AD Christianity was becoming a community of ascetics.⁶⁰ According to him, Antony, as he appears in the *Vita Antonii*, is the realization of the Greek ideal of the «philosophic life». In other words, every aspect of the monastic life, - the use of distinctive clothing, the aim of the subjection of the body, the notion of inner warfare, the idea of monastic life as the «philosophic life», and the whole terminology of asceticism, may be traced back to Greek philosophic thought.⁶¹

Leipoldt's analysis was somewhat reductionist, but it does serve to underline the importance of studying the early monastic movement from the point of view of intellectual history and not only as a social historical phenomenon, as has frequently been the case in recent studies.⁶² Forty years ago the concept of «late antiquity» as a period of fruitful flowering of the encounter between Hellenism and Christianity had not yet taken hold. Hellenism was often viewed as a foreign import that had contaminated the original pure Christian message. More recently, scholars such as Pierre Hadot have stressed the ways in which different systems of thought, Jewish, Greek, Christian have interacted with one another.⁶³ Ancient ideas and literary forms have been transposed into new environments, have been «contaminated», so to speak, and have modified their original meaning or received new meaning. This complex process has only been partially studied in the formation of the early monastic tradition. To give but one example, we can return to the question of *anapausis*. Had the author mentioned earlier (Holze) cast his net more widely, he would have discovered that the term is used extensively by Philo of Alexandria, Clement of Rome, Flavius Josephus, Plutarch, Galen and last, but not least by Clement of Alexandria (50 times) and Origen (133x). In the fourth century it is found extensively in Eusebius (144x), Didymus (103x), Ps. Macarius (259x) and John Chrysostom (467x), to mention just a few. To appreciate the intellectual history of early mo-

60 LEIPOLDT, *Griechische Philosophie*, 42.

61 LEIPOLDT, *Griechische Philosophie*, 60-63.

62 For a criticism of this tendency, see: C. STEWART, «Asceticism: A Feature Review», *The American Benedictine Review* 48 (1997) 254-265.

63 See for example, P. HADOT, *Philosophy as a Way of Life. Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. A.I. Davidson, Oxford 1995.

nasticism much more extensive studies are needed on the ways in which the intellectual heritage of ancient philosophy and its vocabulary were transposed into the monastic environment.⁶⁴ Also needed are careful studies of the ways in which this vocabulary was translated into other ancient languages.⁶⁵

This Hellenistic heritage of early monasticism was transmitted, ironically, primarily through the reading and interpretation of the Scriptures. Philo of Alexandria played a major role in the fusion of Hellenistic and Jewish cultures through his interpretations of the Hebrew Scriptures in a philosophical key. These interpretations in turn provided material for Christian interpreters, above all Origen. Reading was already a spiritual exercise in the Hellenistic philosophical tradition and Philo transposed this into reading the Scriptures and interpreting them allegorically. The citations from and allusions to the Scriptures in early monastic literature show an extraordinarily detailed knowledge of the texts. Numerous early monastic texts show the monks memorizing and reciting from memory great quantities of text. Athanasius says that Antony learned the ascetic life from the Scriptures and affirms that among the practices that Antony wanted to learn from the advanced ascetics of his locality was reading or study. Athanasius uses a term to designate this activity which literally means «love of reading», but which had acquired a technical sense.⁶⁶ Thus it is clear that the intellectual history of early monasticism must take into account the central role of the Scriptures in monastic practice as the vehicle for the transmission of the tradition.⁶⁷

It is time now to return to our point of departure, the question of the subjective component in historical writing and to Bagnall's observation that the

64 As an example of this kind of study, one may cite: P. MIQUEL, *Lexique du desert: Etude de quelques mots-clés du vocabulaire monastique grec ancien*, Bégrolles-en-Mauges 1986. However, Miquel studies only 16 terms and these somewhat superficially. At least two hundred such terms are worth studying. What is needed in fact is the intellectual equivalent of a genome in which the sources of the terms and their mutations through translation or combination with other ideas are plotted out. An outstanding example of this kind of study is that of the famous precept «know yourself» by P. COURCELLE, *Connais-toi toi-même 1-3* (Études Augustiniennes), Paris 1974-1975.

65 See for example: L.T.A. LORIÉ, *Spiritual Terminology in the Latin Translations of the Vita Antonii with reference to fourth and fifth century monastic literature*, Utrecht 1955, and my own study of the Latin terminology for *apatheia*: M. SHERIDAN, «The Controversy over ἀπάθεια. Cassian's sources and his use of them», in this volume, 335-363.

66 See K. GIRARDET, «Philologos und philologeîn», *Kleronomia* 2 (1970) 323-333.

67 For more extensive observations about the question of monastic intellectual history, I refer to my article, «The Spiritual and Intellectual World of Early Egyptian Monasticism», in this volume, 47-87.

renunciation of sexual activity leaves no one without an opinion. Perhaps one should also ask why this should be the case? The answer is not difficult to find. The fact is that the phenomenon of celibacy goes against the biologically obvious norm and, practiced on a large scale, it is a puzzling phenomenon. Therefore historians seek to explain it and their explanations inevitably depend on their preconceptions. One could cite many more interpretations of early monastic history, which regard it simply as an aberration, as did Gibbon, or that reveal preconceptions or the use of dubious hermeneutical keys, such as that of Harnack for whom monasticism represented a kind of early Protestantism that failed because it succumbed to a take-over by the hierarchy⁶⁸ or that it represented a desire for more freedom in the face of increasing ecclesiastical control⁶⁹ or the judgments that compare it unfavorably to western medieval monasticism.⁷⁰ One of these latter is worth citing as an example. H.I. Bell (a distinguished Egyptologist and papyrologist) wrote:

The debt of Europe to monasticism is immense. ... On Egyptian monasticism the verdict must be less favorable. The sayings and the anecdotes recorded of the early ascetics show that their almost incredible austerities did produce striking spiritual insight and a fine Christian morality, but on the whole it must be acknowledged that Egyptian monasticism contributed very little to the development of Christian thought, though monastic libraries have preserved Coptic translations of many works which would otherwise have perished. The monks were largely native Egyptians whose simple minds were quite incapable of grasping any theological subtlety. It was this fact, combined with the Egyptian instinct to reject anything favored by the Imperial government, which led the Egyptian Church to espouse the Monophysite heresy and, after the Council of Chalcedon in 451, to go into permanent schism, after which it ceased to be of much account in the history of theological speculation.⁷¹

Most of these points are highly debatable and show an insufficient acquaintance with the theological literature of the period. Bell was primarily a papyrolo-

68 A. HARNACK, *Monasticism. Its Ideals and History*, New York 1895.

69 C.W. GRIGGS, *Early Egyptian Christianity. From its Origins to 451 C.E.*, Leiden 1990, 102.

70 For a recent example, see D.N. BELL, «Christ in the Desert», *American Benedictine Review* 50 (1999) 381-396. The latter has been ably answered by T. VIVIAN, «“Christ in the Desert” - A Response», *American Benedictine Review* 52 (2002) 393-420.

71 H. I. BELL, *Cults and Creeds in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (The Forwood Lectures for 1952), Chicago 1975, 100.

gist and may be excused for not having a thorough acquaintance with the literary and theological sources, but not for this opinion. In any case the research of the last fifty years has amply demonstrated that the architects of the single-nature (*mia-physis*) theology were not ignorant Coptic monks, but highly educated Greek speakers.⁷² However, the principal problem with this evaluation is not the ignorance demonstrated, but the point of view, the judgment rendered from the perspective of a western centered notion of «development of Christian thought» that makes no effort to understand Egyptian monasticism in terms of its own intellectual or spiritual world. The judgment is made in terms of the value assigned to monasticism as transmitter of cultural values, not in terms of its own values and goals.

As we have noted earlier, the influence of Gibbon can still be felt. No less an authority on historiography than Arnaldo Momigliano reasserted forty years ago «the view that there is a direct relation between the triumph of Christianity and the decline of the Roman empire».⁷³ He hastened to add that this did not mean a simple return to Gibbon, who, he says, simplified a very complicated issue, but perceived correctly that the Church attracted many men and resources that would otherwise have been dedicated to the old political, military and cultural institutions. «Money which would have gone to the building of a theatre or of an aqueduct now went to the building of churches and monasteries. The social equilibrium changed – to the advantage of the spiritual and physical condition of monks and priests, but to the disadvantage of the ancient institutions of the empire».⁷⁴ His characterization of hermits as «a clear menace to orderly Christian society» is puzzling. Each of them, he says, «organized his life on his own lines, defying the authority of the bishops and claiming to be the embodiment of the perfect Christian life».⁷⁵ One can only wonder where the historical evidence for this assertion is to be found, for it does not seem to correspond to what we know about the communities of hermits that formed at Nitria, Scetis or around Antony. The statement seems to be based on an abstract idea of «hermit» rather than on real historical hermits. Momigliano goes on to observe

72 For a survey of the principal authors, see: A. GRILLMEIER, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche. 2/4: Die Kirche von Alexandrien mit Nubien und Äthiopien nach 451*, Freiburg im Breisgau 1990, and D.W. JOHNSON, «Pope Timothy II Aelurus. His Life and His Importance For the Development of Christianity in Egypt», *Coptica* 1 (2002) 77-89.

73 MOMIGLIANO, «Christianity and the Decline of the Roman Empire», 75.

74 MOMIGLIANO, «Christianity and the Decline of the Roman Empire», 78-79.

75 MOMIGLIANO, «Christianity and the Decline of the Roman Empire», 80.

that through the efforts of Athanasius, Pachomius, Basil, and others «monasticism as a whole ceased to be a danger and became a source of power and inspiration for the Church». Then he states in summary fashion, «Monasticism is the most obvious example of the way in which Christianity built something of its own which undermined the military and political structure of the Roman empire».⁷⁶ Presumably this means that, if the monks had devoted themselves to military service and to politics, the empire would not have been undermined. Space does not allow us to set forth Momigliano's views at length, which are more nuanced than has been indicated. Yet one cannot avoid the impression of regret on the part of the historian for the passing of the old cultural ideals.

That regret is more pronounced in the work of a historian influenced by Momigliano, Peter Brown, whose characterizations of monasticism leave no doubt about his feelings with regard to the ideal of celibacy. The «monks had settled on the social equivalent of an Antarctic continent, reckoned from time immemorial to be a blank space on the map of Mediterranean society – a no-man's land that flanked the life of the city, flouted organized culture and held up a permanent alternative to the crowded and relentlessly disciplined life of the villages».⁷⁷ Brown asserts that monasticism drew on the more radical aspects of the pagan philosophic counterculture such as the life-style of the Cynics, and that their «personal preoccupation with new forms of personal discipline, which included the renunciation of sexuality, ensured that a very different flavor would be instilled into the private life of the Christian family within that society».⁷⁸ Brown seems particularly concerned with what he perceives to be the effects of monasticism on society in general rather than on the monks themselves: «Of all the aspects of the life of the settled community upon which the monastic paradigm laid a vast, impalpable burden, the most intimate was that associated with marriage, with intercourse within marriage, and with the role of sexuality».⁷⁹ The only evidence cited for this sweeping generalization is the sermons of John Chrysostom. Whether such an impressionistic portrait of «private life» can be called «history» is doubtful, but about the influence of his rhetoric on historical writing there can be no doubt. The numerous works published in the last twenty years containing the phrase «the making of» in the

76 MOMIGLIANO, «Christianity and the Decline of the Roman Empire», 81-82.

77 P. BROWN, «The Challenge of the Desert», in *A History of Private Life. 1. From Pagan Rome to Byzantium*, ed. P. Veyne, Cambridge, Mass. 1987, 288.

78 BROWN, «The Challenge of the Desert», 289-291.

79 BROWN, «The Challenge of the Desert», 295.

title testify to that.⁸⁰ In any case Brown's writing represents an example where the subjective preferences of the author color the presentation considerably and the interpretation overwhelms the evidence.

Although many questionable interpretations of the evidence have been proposed in the last three centuries, at the same time, particularly in the last hundred years, there have been many fine contributions to the history of early Egyptian monasticism through the publication of texts, whether literary or documentary, and through many archaeological investigations.⁸¹ There are very useful studies on particular subjects, such as Pachomian monasticism or the history of the monasteries of the Wadi Natrun. Far more material is now available for describing and understanding the phenomenon than was available 300 years ago, but the work of integration or synthesis remains largely to be done. Such a synthesis should aim first of all to describe the full extent of monasticism in Egypt in the fourth century. It must certainly take into account the social impact of such a widespread phenomenon and to describe its social role. Likewise it must describe the evolving role of monasticism in relationship to and within the Egyptian church, whose role also developed notably in the course of the fourth century.⁸² And, last but not least, it must seek to describe and explain the complex intellectual history of early monasticism within the equally complex and rich intellectual world of what is now called late antiquity.

Since this essay is not a bibliographic survey, but a brief sketch of some of the main aspects of the historiography of early Egyptian monasticism in the last three hundred years, only a few of the more representative contributions have been mentioned. However, it is essential to note that history, the reconstruction of the past, is always a collaborative effort that involves sifting and separating fact and opinion as Tillemont set out to do. It always involves seeking to understand and interpret the historical evidence from many sources. It always builds

80 See P. BROWN, *The Making of Late Antiquity*, Cambridge, Mass. 1978.

81 An excellent example of carefully documented study of the interaction between monasticism and Egyptian society can be found in the work of E. WIPSZYCKA, *Études sur le christianisme dans l'Égypte de l'antiquité tardive*, (SEAug 52), Roma 1996.

82 Here one cannot fail to mention the impressive contribution of A. MARTIN, *Athanase d'Alexandrie et l'Église d'Égypte au IV^e siècle (328-373)*, (Collection de l'École Française de Rome 216), Roma 1996. Now (2012) two recent publications should also be mentioned: E. WIPSZYCKA, *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (IV^e-VIII^e siècles)* (The Journal of Juristic Papyrology Supplements XI.), Warsaw 2009, and M. GIORDA, *Monachesimo e istituzioni ecclesiastiche in Egitto. Alcuni casi di interazione e integrazione*, Bologna 2010.

on the contributions of our predecessors, even if we criticize them. It always involves efforts to integrate new evidence and to reflect on our changing points of view and tools. In the end the historian needs to reflect on the limits of his knowledge, to note the many missing pieces that may never be recovered. In short, the historian's task is never finished.

THE CONCEPT OF THE «USEFUL» AS AN EXEGETICAL TOOL IN PATRISTIC EXEGESIS¹

Commenting on the text of Exodus 1:15-17, which contains the command of the Egyptian king to the Hebrew mid-wives to kill the male children and preserve the life of the females, Origen writes: «But we, who have learned that all things which are written are written not to relate ancient history, but for our discipline and use, (2 Tim 3:16) understand that these things which are said also happen now not only in this world, which is figuratively called Egypt, but in each one of us also».² This text may serve as a starting point for a brief consideration of a phenomenon that is fairly widespread in patristic exegesis, the notion of «usefulness» as a criterion for determining the/a meaning of the text. The presence of this criterion has been noted by Simonetti in a number of authors beginning with Origen and including Didymus, Gregory of Nyssa, Diodorus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Cyril, and Hesychius, but its presuppositions and implications have not been developed in any detail.³ In the text just

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- 1 Published originally in: *Papers presented at the Fourteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2003* (Studia Patristica 39), ed. F. Young - M. Edwards - P. Parvis, Leuven 2006, 253-257.
 - 2 *HomEx 2:1: Sed nos, qui omnia quae scripta sunt, non pro narrationibus antiquitatum, sed pro disciplina et utilitate nostra scripta sunt didicimus, haec quae leguntur, etiam nunc fieri non solum in hoc mundo, qui Aegyptus figuraliter dicitur, sed et in uno quoque nostrum deprehendimus.* (SCH 321, 70). Eng. tr.: ORIGEN, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, tr. R.E. Heine (FC 71), Washington, D.C. 1982, 240. The editor of the SCH edition (as well as the English translator) gives the biblical reference as 1 Cor 10:11. The latter, however, does not contain the word «useful» (*utilitate nostra*), which seems more likely to come from 2 Tim 3:16 *πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος πρὸς διδασκαλίαν, πρὸς ἐλεγμὸν, πρὸς ἐπανάρθωσιν, πρὸς παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ, (Vulgate: omnis scriptura divinitus inspirata et utilis ad docendum ad arguendum ad corrigendum ad erudiendum in iustitia)*. The broader context for both passages is the Pauline belief that the Scriptures are «for us» (1 Cor 9:10).
 - 3 M. SIMONETTI, *Lettera e/o Allegoria. Un contributo alla storia dell'esegesi patristica*, Roma 1985, 79, notes that one of Origen's three fundamental exegetical principles is practical () for which all the Scriptures, in which every word has its precise reason for being there, must result in what is spiritually useful to the interpreter.

quoted, the phrase «for our discipline and use» appears to be an allusion to 2 Tim 3:16: «All Scripture is inspired of God and is useful for teaching – for reproof, correction, and training in holiness». (NAB) This text undoubtedly played a significant role in the development of the notion of the «useful» as an exegetical tool. Origen, speaking about the obscurity of the Scriptures and the difficulty of understanding them in one of his homilies on Joshua, cites it directly and concludes, «Thus if it is “inspired by divine influence and is useful”, we ought to believe that it is useful even if we do not discern the usefulness».⁴ He compares the Scriptures to food or drink prescribed by a physician, whose usefulness we do not immediately perceive but which works its effects with time and concludes, «we should also believe this about Holy Scripture, that it is useful and benefits the soul even if our perception at the present does not understand why». He insists that «there is a certain strength in Holy Scripture that may avail the reader, even without explanation». However, the real usefulness of Scripture does not lie on this level, but in «the explanation of hidden and secret things», as he hints even in this passage.

Although 2 Tim 3:16 may have supplied the blind belief that all Scripture is useful, the criterion of usefulness also involves certain preconceptions about what is useful and what is not useful in the Scriptures, preconceptions that do not derive from 2 Tim 3:16. In fact, the notion of what is not useful may be as important as the notion of what is useful, at least in terms of providing an impetus for seeking a «useful» meaning not present in the literal sense. Both categories may be illustrated by some examples. The text from the homily on Exod 1:15-17, already cited at the beginning, provides a first contrast between what is useless and what is useful: the Scriptures are not written «to relate ancient history, but for our discipline and use...». History, understood as the simple narrative of past events, is generally not useful, or at best, has a very limited use. Speaking of the creation account in Genesis, Origen concedes that the language of the narrator makes the doctrinal point that «all visible things were created at a definite time», although the account itself «may well enshrine certain deeper truths than the mere record of the history seems to reveal and may contain a spiritual meaning in many passages, using the letter as a kind of veil for profound and mystical doctrines».⁵ In general the «bodily» sense of the Scrip-

4 *HomJos* 20,2. Eng. tr.: ORIGEN, *Homilies on Joshua*, tr. B.J. Bruce (FC 105), Washington, DC 2002, 177.

5 *PArch* 3, 5, 1: *Quae licet maiora quaedam intra se contineat, quam historiae narratio videtur ostendere, et spiritalem in quam maximis contineat intellectum atque in rebus mysticis et*

tures, which includes historical narrative, has a value for the simple believers, as Origen states clearly in the fourth book of the *Peri Archon*: «That it is possible to derive benefit from the first, and to this extent helpful meaning, is witnessed by the multitudes of sincere and simple believers».⁶ Basically, however, the historical narrative conceals deeper truths. As Origen observes, «the most wonderful thing is, that by means of stories of wars and the conquerors and the conquered certain secret truths are revealed to those who are capable of examining these narratives».⁷ The text's real usefulness is to be found in these deeper truths. In fact the usefulness of the law and the historical narrative is generally not apparent and Origen affirms that God has even inserted stumbling blocks in the Scriptures,⁸ things that are irrational, impossible or unworthy of the Holy Spirit,⁹ in order to spur the reader to discover what is really useful.¹⁰ The criterion of the useful (or the useless) thus serves alongside several others, the «impossible», the «irrational», and that which is unworthy of the Holy Spirit, as a point of departure from the letter or the historical narrative to seek a spiritual meaning.¹¹ Several examples may serve to illustrate how widely Origen applies

profundis «velamine» quodam litterae utatur: tamen nihilominus hoc indicat sermo narrantis, quod ex certo tempore creata sint omnia quae videntur. [The Greek text for this passage is not extant.] The English translations of the *Peri Archon* are from: ORIGEN, *On First Principles*, tr. G.W. Butterworth, New York 1966, 237.

- 6 *PArch* 4, 2, Ἀπὸ μὲν οὖν τῆς πρώτης ἐκδοχῆς καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο ὠφελοῦσης ὅτι ἔστιν ὄνασθαι, μαρτυρεῖ τὰ πλήθη τῶν γνησίως καὶ ἀπλούστερον πεπιστευκότων·
- 7 *PArch* 4,2,8,10: παραδοξότατα δέ, διὰ ἱστορίας τῆς περὶ πολέμων καὶ νενικηκότων καὶ νενικημένων τινὰ τῶν ἀπορρήτων τοῖς ταῦτα βασανίζειν δυναμένοις σαφηνίζεται.
- 8 *PArch* 4,2,8,10.
- 9 Cf. *HomGn* 7,1; 7,2 «the historical narrative appears to reveal nothing worthy of the divine law». See also *HomGn* 10,2; *HomNum* 12,4.
- 10 *PArch* 4,2,9: Ἄλλ' ἐπεὶ περ, εἰ δι' ὅλων σαφῶς τὸ τῆς νομοθεσίας χρησίμων αὐτόθεν ἐφαίνετο καὶ τὸ τῆς ἱστορίας ἀκόλουθον καὶ γλαφυρόν, ἠπιστήσαμεν ἂν ἄλλο τι παρὰ τὸ πρόχειρον νοεῖσθαι δύνασθαι ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς, ὅκονόμησέ τινα οἰονεῖ 'σκάνδαλα' καὶ 'προσκόμματα' καὶ 'ἀδύνατα' διὰ μέσου ἐγκαταταχθῆναι τῷ νόμῳ καὶ τῇ ἱστορίᾳ ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος (SCh 7bis, 192). «But if the usefulness of the law and the sequence and ease of the narrative were at first sight clearly discernible throughout, we should be unaware that there was anything beyond the obvious meaning for us to understand in the scriptures. Consequently the Word of God has arranged for certain stumbling-blocks, as it were, and hindrances and impossibilities to be inserted in the midst of the law and the history...», ORIGEN, *On First Principles*, 285.
- 11 The criteria of the «irrational» (ἄλογον) and the «impossible» (ἀδύνατον) are found already in Philo.

this criterion. After giving an allegorical explanation of the story of Abimelech in Gen 20:17-18, Origen exclaims:

Let the Church of God, therefore, in this way understand the births, in this way receive the procreations, in this way uphold the deeds of the fathers with a fitting and honorable interpretation, in this way not disgrace the words of the Holy Spirit with foolish and Jewish fables (cf. 1 Tim 4:7; Ti 1:14), but reckon them to be full of honor, full of virtue and usefulness.¹²

The alternative is that we receive no edification from the story, which is positively dangerous because it portrays the patriarch and his wife engaging in immoral activity. On the literal level, the text offers «foolish and Jewish fables», which are obviously not useful. Similarly, commenting on the story of Deborah in the book of Judges (Jud 4:4-6), after quoting 2 Tim 3:16 explicitly, Origen asks what profit is it to us if we hear that Deborah was the wife of Lappidoth and was sitting under a palm tree?¹³ The only way to make the text useful is to give it an allegorical interpretation. Likewise, interpreting the Canticle where the bridegroom invites the bride to show her face (2:13b – 14), Origen remarks: «But these things seem to me to afford no profit (*utilitatem*) to the readers as far as the story (*ad historicam narrationem*) goes; nor do they maintain any continuous narrative such as we find in other Scripture stories. It is necessary, therefore, rather to give them all a spiritual meaning».¹⁴ That spiritual meaning refers of course to the moral life of the individual soul, the hermeneutical key that Origen applies along with that of the Church throughout his interpretation of the Canticle.¹⁵

The criterion of usefulness is applied not only to historical narrative, but to the mass of legislation as well. Thus Origen writes: «A similar method can be

12 *HomGn* 6,3: *Ecclesia igitur Dei sic intelligat partus, sic generationes accipiat, sic patrum gesta decora et honesta interpretatione sustollat, sic verba Spiritus sancti non ineptis et Iudaicis fabulis decoloret, sed plena honestatis, plena virtutis atque utilitatis assignet.* Eng. tr.: ORIGEN, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, tr. R.E. Heine (FC 71), Washington, D.C. 1982, 126.

13 *HomJd* 5,1.

14 *ComCt* 4,15: *Sed haec nullam mihi videntur, quantum ad historicam narrationem pertinet, utilitatem conferre legentibus aut aliquam saltem narrationis ipsius servare consequentiam, sicut in ceteris Scripturae historiis invenimus. Unde necesse est cuncta ad spiritalem transferre intelligentiam,* W.A. BAEHRENS, *Origenes Werke* 8, (GCS 33), Leipzig 1925, 229. Eng. tr.: ORIGEN, *The Song of Songs. Commentary and Homilies* (ACW 26), Westminster, Md. 1957, 247.

15 Cf. *ComCt* 1,1.

discerned also in the law, where it is often possible to find a precept that is useful for its own sake, and suitable to the time when the law was given. Sometimes, however, the precept does not appear to be useful». ¹⁶ That means that it must be interpreted spiritually, since all Scripture is useful.

Origen concedes occasionally that «even the history» contains something useful, ¹⁷ but more often the usefulness is to be found in the mystery concealed in the historical narrative. ¹⁸ Yet even when the historical sense is acknowledged to be useful, it is not because the narration of past events as such is useful, but because they contain a moral teaching, as he notes in commenting on Lev 5:1-2: «This even instructs us and teaches us according to the historical sense, lest at any time we defile our conscience in the sins of another or, at any time, give consent to those who are doing evil». ¹⁹ The contrast between history and mystery is found many times in Origen, ²⁰ and, at least in some cases, reflects the same contrast in Philo. As Origen himself notes while explaining the story of Rebecca, «I have often said already that in these stories history is not being narrated, but mysteries are interwoven». ²¹ However, whereas in Philo the mystery often conceals moral teaching, in Origen the content pertains more frequently to the economy of salvation. As he says with reference to the wanderings in the desert: «If we follow the simple record of facts, it does not edify us much to know to what place they came first and to what place second. But if we pry into the mystery lying hidden in these matters we discover the order of faith». ²² Origen is then able to detect references to the mystery of the cross and the twelve apostles in the text of Exodus. Mystery is useful because it conducts the reader to Christ and thus provides spiritual nourishment. The moral meaning is also «very use-

16 *PArch* 4,2,9: τὸ δ' ἀνάλογον καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς νομοθεσίας ἐκκληπτέον, ἐν ᾗ ἔστι πλεονάκις εὐρεῖν καὶ τὸ αὐτόθεν χρήσιμον, πρὸς τοὺς καιροὺς τῆς νομοθεσίας ἀρμόζον· ἐνίοτε δὲ λόγος χρήσιμος οὐκ ἐμφαίνεται. Eng. tr.: ORIGEN, *On First Principles*, 286.

17 *HomNum* 22,1.

18 *HomNum* 21,1.

19 *HomLev* 3,2: *Hoc etiam secundum historiam nos aedificat et docet, ne umquam in peccatis alterius polluamus conscientias nostras, ne consensum male agentibus praebeamus* (Sch 286, 124).

20 See, for example: *HomNum* 21,1; *ComCt* 2; *HomEx* 7,3; *HomGn* 2,1.

21 *HomGn* 10,4: *Saepe iam dixi quod in his non historiae narrantur, sed mysteria contexuntur* (Sch 7 bis, 266-268).

22 *HomEx* 7,3: *Si historiam solam sequamur, non multum nos aedificat scire, ad quem locum primo venerint et ad quem secundo; si vero rimemur in his mysterium latens, invenimus ordinem fidei* (Sch 321), 212, Eng. tr.: ORIGEN, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, 304.

ful» as Origen notes in an explanation of the three days journey in the wilderness mentioned in Exod 3:18.²³

Although it is not possible to develop the theme here for lack of time, it is interesting to note a certain coincidence between Origen's preconceptions about what is useful and those of the Hellenistic world. In a text often cited by commentators on 2 Tim 3:16, Epictetus insists on proper preparation for participation in the Eleusinian mysteries and says, «Only so do the Mysteries bring benefit, only so do we arrive at the belief that all these things were established by those of old for our education and the amendment of our life».²⁴ The Stoic identification of the «useful» with what is morally profitable is also well known.²⁵

In conclusion I would note also that the category of «usefulness» was one of several instruments that could be employed in a theological critique of the Scriptures in order to render acceptable what was at face value unacceptable to later generations.

23 *HomEx* 3,3 (SCh 321, 100-102): «But if we also require a place for the moral meaning which is very useful for us, we travel a "journey of three days" from Egypt if we thus preserve ourselves from all filth of soul, body, and spirit, that, as the Apostle said, "our spirit and soul and body may be kept whole in the day of Jesus Christ". We travel a "journey of three days" from Egypt if, ceasing from wordly things we turn our rational, natural, moral wisdom to the divine laws. We travel a "journey of three days" from Egypt if, purifying our words, deeds, or thoughts - for these are the three things by which men can sin - we would be made "pure in heart" so that we could "see God" » (cf. Matt 5:8). Eng. tr.: ORIGEN, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, 253-254.

24 EPICTETUS, *Dissertationes* 3,21. Eng. tr. W.J. OATES, *The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers. The Complete Writings of Epicurus, Epictetus, Lucretius, Marus Aurelius*, New York 1940, 375.

25 See G. JÜSSEN, «Nutzen, Nützlichkeit», in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* 6, Basel/Stuttgart 1972, 992-100.

ORIGEN'S CONCEPT OF SCRIPTURE. THE BASIS OF EARLY CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

Although much attention has been devoted to analysing the rules of interpretation employed by ancient interpreters, less attention has been given to the more fundamental concepts presupposed by the rules. Among these the concept of «Scripture» itself is the most basic. The concept of «scripture» as understood by that most influential of all early interpreters, Origen of Alexandria, would be fairly easy to describe from a theological point of view and it has been done many times. Origen himself elaborated his own understanding of it, as well as the rules of exegesis to be followed, in the fourth book of his first great work, the *De Principiis* (in Greek *Peri Archon*). The main lines of his understanding can be summarized in the following way.¹ For Origen the entire Scriptures are the word of Christ and Christ is the key to understanding all of them. By «words of Christ» he means not only those words that formed his teaching after the incarnation, but also Moses and the prophets who were filled with the spirit of Christ. For the same Word of God that is found in the Scriptures before the Incarnation is the Word Incarnate.² Through an examination of the fulfilment of the «oracles» of Christ (Matt 24:14; 7:22) and of other prophetic utterances in the Scriptures (Gen 49:10; Hos 3:4), Origen demonstrates the divine nature of the Scriptures or, as he says, that they are «divine writings» (*theiōn grammaton*).³ The entire Scriptures are revelation of Christ, whether the Old Testament (the law and the prophets) or the New Testament (the gospel and

1 An excellent summary can be found in M. SIMONETTI, «Scrittura sacra», in *Origene Dizionario, la cultura, il pensiero, le opere*, ed. A. Monaci Castagno, Roma 2000, 424-425.

2 *PArch* 1, praef. 1 «we should not find it difficult to show that Moses or the prophets were filled with the spirit of Christ in all their words and deeds»; see also *HomIs* 1:5; *SerMt* 28:54.119; *FragJn* 46.

3 *PArch* 4,1,2-3. Origen employs the Greek word generally translated as «oracle» (*chrēsmos*) to describe the predictions of Jesus found in the gospels. He concludes, «Now there was once a possibility that in uttering these words he was talking idly, because they were not true; but when words spoken with such authority have come to pass it shows that God has really become man and delivered to men the doctrines of salvation».

the apostles). Christ himself, since he is the Logos, is the word of God and, as a consequence for Origen, Christ and the Scriptures are to be identified. Scripture is the perennial incarnation of the Logos. Thus Origen can identify the treasure hidden in the field (Matt 13:44) with both Christ and with Scripture⁴ and likewise compares the Word of God that is clothed with flesh through Mary with the Scripture that is covered with the veil of the literal sense.⁵ Thus only through a searching study of the Scriptures can we know Christ. Origen accepts the common doctrine that the Holy Spirit inspired all the authors of Scripture, whether Moses or the Apostles, to such an extent that the Holy Spirit is to be considered the true author of the sacred texts.⁶

For Origen, preaching the word of God is preaching Christ and is a process of revelation realized in the understanding created in the individual mind of the listener. Commenting on Exod 35:4-10 where Moses commands the people «Take from yourselves» gold and silver and other materials for the construction of the tabernacle, Origen explains that gold refers to «the faith of your heart» and silver to «the word of confession». These spiritual qualities along with the allegorical meanings of bronze, purple, scarlet, linen, goat's hair, etc., are used in the construction of the Lord's tabernacle. The word preached and received in the heart and understanding of the individual constructs the tabernacle in which the Lord lives. This is the meaning of the phrase, «take from yourselves». Origen concludes by comparing the reception of the word to the reception of the body of the Lord in the Eucharist:

You who are accustomed to take part in divine mysteries know, when you receive the body of the Lord, how you protect it with all caution and veneration lest any small part fall from it, lest anything of the consecrated gift be lost. For you believe, and correctly, that you are answerable if anything falls from there by neglect. But if you are so careful to preserve his body, and rightly so, how do you think that there is less guilt to have neglected God's word than to have neglected his body?⁷

4 *ComMt* 10,6: «Now a man who comes to the field, whether to the Scriptures or to the Christ who is constituted both from things manifest and from things hidden, finds the hidden treasure of wisdom whether in Christ or in the Scriptures».

5 *HomLev* 1,1: Origen states that the rites of sacrifice, the various victims, and the ministries of the priests described in Leviticus are «like the flesh of the Word of God».

6 *PArch* 1, *prae*f. 4; *PArch* 1,3,1; 4,2,7; 4,3,14; *CCels* 3,3; 5,60; *ComMt* 14,4; *HomGn* 7,1; *HomEx* 2,1; *HomNum* 1,1; 2,1; *HomJos* 8,6; *Hom 1R (1S)* 5,4.

7 *HomEx* 13,3. The translation is from ORIGEN, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, tr. R.E. Heine, (The Fathers of the Church 71), Washington, D.C. 1982, 380-381.

This exhortation, it should be remembered, is in reference not to texts of the New Testament, but to a detailed description of the construction of the tabernacle in Exodus!

However, this is actually all on a rather theoretical, abstract or theological level. Despite this faith-inspired Christian theological vision of the Scriptures, which is the presupposition for and often determines the outcome of his specific exegesis, there are other aspects of Origen's concept of Scripture that he shares with the non-Christian world of his time about the nature of sacred writings, and these also influence the outcome of his exegesis. Moreover, in addition to the conscious explicit hermeneutical principles elaborated by Origen and others in the patristic period there are others, unconscious or not very clearly formulated, yet important for understanding their world. Here I would like to concentrate on four of these aspects: 1) the difference between Paul and Origen, 2) the concept «worthy of God», 3) the notion of a «treasure in the details», 4) the idea that the biblical narratives are not «history but mystery».

1. PAUL AND ORIGEN

Despite Origen's insistence that all of the Scriptures are to be identified with Christ, if we look more closely, we discover that Origen had a rather different attitude toward the text of the Old and New Testaments. Although he thought of himself as a disciple of Paul and thought that his way of interpreting the Scriptures was a continuation of the example and rules that Paul himself had given,⁸ including allegorical interpretation, his attitude toward the text of the Old Testament in particular was very different from that of Paul. Whereas Paul accepted without question that the Scriptures (Moses and the Prophets) were divinely

8 See *HomEx* 5,1: «The Apostle Paul, "teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth" (cf. 1 Tim 2:7) taught the Church which he gathered from the Gentiles how it ought to interpret the books of the Law. These books were received from others and were formerly unknown to the Gentiles and were very strange. He feared that the Church, receiving foreign instructions and not knowing the principle of the instructions, would be in a state of confusion about the foreign document. For that reason he gives some examples of interpretation that we also might note similar things in other passages, lest we believe that by imitation of the text and document of the Jews we be made disciples. He wishes, therefore, to distinguish disciples of Christ from disciples of the Synagogue by the way they understand the Law. The Jews, by misunderstanding it, rejected Christ. We, by understanding the Law spiritually, show that it was justly given for the instruction of the Church». The translation is from *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, tr. R.E. Heine, (FC 71), Washington, D.C. 1982, 275. For a more extensive treatment of the role of Paul in Origen's thought, see F. COCCINI, *Il Paolo di Origene* (Verba Seniorum N.S. 11), 1992.

inspired, for Origen this is not at all the case. This he states quite explicitly in the *Peri Archon*:

And we must add that it was after the advent of Jesus that the inspiration of the prophetic words and the spiritual nature of Moses' law came to light. For before the advent of Christ it was not at all possible to bring forward clear proofs of the divine inspiration of the old scriptures. But the advent of Jesus led those who might have suspected that the law and the prophets were not divine to the clear conviction that they were composed by the aid of heavenly grace.⁹

Paul could never have uttered such words. The fact that Origen did reveals the cultural and historical divide that separates the two despite much obvious continuity. Although, after his conversion Paul saw Christ as the key to interpreting the Scriptures correctly, as a practicing Jew he had been attached to these Scriptures before his conversion. They were an integral part of his cultural and religious identity even though his culture was Hellenistic Judaism. One hundred and fifty years later the situation in which Origen found himself was quite different. Fully at home in the literary and philosophical culture of the Hellenistic world, Origen had a quite different sensibility regarding the Scriptures of the Old Testament. They could only be regarded as inspired in the light of Jesus seen as their fulfillment. Then their «spiritual nature» came to light. Origen goes on to say soon after the passage already quoted: «Now the light which was contained within the law of Moses, but was hidden away under a veil, shone forth at the advent of Jesus, when the veil was taken away and there came at once to men's knowledge those "good things" of which the letter of the law held a "shadow"» (cf. 2 Cor 3:15,16; Heb 10:1).¹⁰

Origen did not in fact have a very high regard for the «letter of the law». It would not be much of an exaggeration to say that as far as the value of the

9 *PArch* 4,1,6: λεκτέον δὲ ὅτι τὸ τῶν προφητικῶν λόγων ἔνθεον καὶ τὸ πνευματικὸν τοῦ Μωσέως νόμου ἔλαμψεν ἐπιδημήσαντος Ἰησοῦ. ἐναργῆ γὰρ παραδείγματα περὶ τοῦ θεοπνεύστου εἶναι τὰς παλαιὰς γραφὰς πρὸ τῆς ἐπιδημίας τοῦ Χριστοῦ παραστήσαι οὐ πάνυ δυνατὸν ἦν· ἀλλ' ἡ Ἰησοῦ ἐπιδημία δυναμένους ὑποπτέυσθαι τὸν νόμον καὶ τοὺς προφῆτας ὡς οὐ θεῖα εἰς τοῦμφανὲς ἤγαγεν ὡς οὐρανίῳ χάριτι ἀναγεγραμμένα. The English translation of the Greek text is from: ORIGEN, *On First Principles*, tr. - ed. G.W. Butterworth, New York 1966, 264.

10 *PArch* 4,1,6: καὶ τὸ ἐνυπάρχον δὲ φῶς τῷ Μωσέως νόμῳ, «καλύμματι» ἐναποκεκρυμμένον, συνέλαμψε τῇ Ἰησοῦ ἐπιδημίᾳ «περιαιρεθέντος τοῦ καλύμματος» καὶ «τῶν ἀγαθῶν» κατὰ βραχὺ εἰς γνώσιν ἐρχομένων, ὧν «σκιά» εἶχε τὸ γράμμα.

letter went, he was not very far from the position of Marcion.¹¹ Marcion had in fact excluded the hermeneutical technique, allegory, which made it possible for Origen to perceive the «spiritual nature» of the Law. The prolonged struggle in the second century over the canon or rather the question of the relationship of the two «testaments» had had its effects, for it had been resolved basically through resort to allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures on the model of Paul.

2. THE CONCEPT OF GOD AS AN EXEGETICAL PRINCIPLE

But the problem was not only one of cultural diversity and sensibility. It involved the concept of God or the notion of what was fitting or appropriate to God. The embarrassment of the ancient exegete before a text difficult to reconcile with his notion of God is perhaps expressed most clearly by Origen in commenting on Leviticus:

If, according to this [allegorical] interpretation, we say that the supreme God has promulgated laws to men, I think that the legislation will appear worthy of the divine majesty. If instead we insist on the letter and understand the things written in the law as it seems to the Jews and to the crowd, I am ashamed to say and to profess that God should have given such laws. In that case, the laws of men, for example of the Romans or of the Athenians or of the Spartans, will seem more refined and reasonable. If instead, the law of God is accepted according to the understanding which the church teaches, then it stands over all human laws and it will be believed that it is truly the Law of God.¹²

In the phrase «worthy of the divine majesty» we can perceive an ancient idea that goes back to the philosopher Xenophanes, an idea that had been used as a hermeneutical tool in the interpretation of Homer and then later by Philo in the interpretation of the Law of Moses in its Greek version where its most characteristic expression is found in the word *theoprepes* (fitting or appropriate to God).¹³

11 Origen did not of course adopt Marcion's solution; he combated it vigorously (cf. *CCels* 2,27; 5,62; 6,53,74). But he did recognize that the text of the Old Testament posed a problem for the Christian reader.

12 *HomLev* 7,5.

13 See M. SHERIDAN, «"Digne deo". A Traditional Greek Principle of Interpretation in Latin Dress», in *L'Esegesi dei padri latini: dalle origini a Gregorio Magno* (XXVIII Incontro di studiosi dell'antichità cristiana, Roma, 6-8 maggio 1999), Roma 2000, 23-40, and O. DREYER, *Untersuchungen zum Begriff des Gottgeziemenden in der Antike* (Spudasmata 24), Hildesheim-New York 1970.

This concept has played a very great role in the history of interpretation, but it remains insufficiently studied except in the works of Philo. Origen employs it also in the *Peri Archon* where he invokes it in the context of the controversial principle of *defectus litterae*. He explains that certain stumbling-blocks and impossibilities have been inserted in the law and the history «in order that we may not be completely drawn away by the sheer attractiveness of the language, and so either reject the true doctrines absolutely, on the ground that we learn from the scriptures nothing worthy of God, or else by never moving away from the letter fail to learn anything of the more divine element».¹⁴ The more skillful and inquiring readers may thus «gain a sound conviction of the necessity of seeking in such instances a meaning worthy of God».¹⁵ The «meaning worthy of God» (τοῦ θεοῦ ἄξιον νοῦν) is thus raised to the level of a hermeneutical principle. This principle as well as the accompanying ideas of illogical (τὸ ἄλογον) and impossible (τὸ ἀδύνατον) had already been used extensively by Philo of Alexandria.

From the texts just cited as well as many others, it can be seen that we have a paradoxical situation: the text on the literal level is not worthy of God but when it is given a spiritual interpretations it can be seen to be divine. Paradoxically also, if the text is viewed as a human composition, it is not acceptable, it does not even reach the level of classical Greek literature and laws. But viewed as a divine composition it is superior to all other human texts. Origen states this in the same passage from the *Peri Archon* that has already been quoted: «And he who approaches the prophetic words with care and attention will feel from his very reading a trace of their divine inspiration and will be convinced by his own feelings that the words which are believed by us to be from God are not the compositions of men».¹⁶ This contrast between «divine inspiration» (τὸ ἐνθεον) or «words of God» (θεοῦ λόγους) and the «compositions of men» (ἀνθρώπων συγγράμματα) is quite foreign to the modern sensibility accustomed

14 *PArch* 4,2,9: Ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ περ, εἰ δι' ὅλων σαφῶς τὸ τῆς νομοθεσίας χρήσιμον αὐτόθεν ἐφαίνετο καὶ τὸ τῆς ἱστορίας ἀκόλουθον καὶ γλαφυρόν, ἠπιστήσαμεν ἂν ἄλλο τι παρὰ τὸ πρόχειρον νοεῖσθαι δύνασθαι ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς, ὥκονόμησέ τινα οἰοῖναι 'σκάνδαλα' καὶ 'προσκόμματα' καὶ 'ἀδύνατα' διὰ μέσου ἐγκαταταχθῆναι τῷ νόμῳ καὶ τῇ ἱστορίᾳ ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος, ἵνα μὴ πάντῃ ὑπὸ τῆς λέξεως ἐλκόμενοι τὸ ἀγωγὸν ἄκρατον ἐχούσης, ἥτοι ὡς μηδὲν ἄξιον θεοῦ μανθάνοντες, τέλεον ἀποστῶμεν τῶν δογμάτων, ἢ μὴ κινούμενοι ἀπὸ τοῦ γράμματος μηδὲν θεϊότερον μάθωμεν.

15 *PArch* 4,2,9: ἵνα τῇ βασάνῃ τῆς ἐξετάσεως τῶν γεγραμμένων ἐπιδιδόντες ἑαυτοὺς πείσμα ἀξιόλογον λάβωσι περὶ τοῦ δεῖν τοῦ θεοῦ ἄξιον νοῦν εἰς τὰ τοιαῦτα ζητεῖν.

16 *PArch* 4,1,6: ὁ δὲ μετ' ἐπιμελείας καὶ προσοχῆς ἐντυγχάνων τοῖς προφητικοῖς λόγοις, παθὼν ἐξ αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἀναγινώσκειν ἴχνος ἐνθουσιασμοῦ, δι' ὃν πάσχει πεισθήσεται οὐκ ἀνθρώπων εἶναι συγγράμματα τοὺς πεπιστευμένους ἡμῖν εἶναι θεοῦ λόγους.

to think of the role of human agency in the compositions of the Scriptures, the variety of literary genres, the use of rhetorical figures, etc. However, it must be taken seriously for its consequences. The text understood in this way does not follow human rules of composition and cannot be interpreted as human texts would be interpreted. As a consequence the ordinary rules of rhetoric and even of grammar may not hold. A second feature to be noted in this text is the idea of «enthusiasm» (ἐνθουσιασμός). This is the mystical transport through which the reader is able to perceive the inspired nature (τὸ ἔνθεον) of the Scripture. It may be possible to perceive this even on the level of the literal text, but certainly not in the literal level of many or most texts of the Old Testament, for Origen says explicitly that it was not possible before the advent of Christ. What is perceived then is not the literal text but the «spiritual nature» or the «light» contained within the Law of Moses.¹⁷

3. «A TREASURE IN THE DETAILS»

However, Origen's attitude toward the text of both testaments was determined by other considerations as well. At the beginning of his eighth homily on Genesis, which is devoted to the sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22), after quoting the first verse in which it says that «God tested Abraham and said to him: "Abraham, Abraham"», Origen exhorts his congregation, «Observe each detail which has been written. For, if one knows how to dig into the depth, he will find a treasure in the details, and perhaps also, the precious jewels of the mysteries lie hidden where they are not esteemed».¹⁸ The phrase «a treasure in the details» could be taken as emblematic for a certain understanding of the nature of the biblical text itself. In this particular case Origen goes on to explain that nowhere had God ever called Abraham by the name Abram nor had he ever said «Abram, Abram». The reason why God never called Abraham by the name Abram is that he could not call him by a name that was to be abolished, but only by the name that he himself gave, the name that means «I have made you a father of many nations».¹⁹ The attention to the details involves noting what is not said as well as what is said and the precise terms used to say it. Among the details on which

17 On the notion of «enthusiasm» see the note of Simonetti in *Traité des principes IV* (Livres III et IV): *Commentaire et Fragments* (Sch 269), ed H. Crouzel - M. Simonetti, Paris 1980, 162, n.34.

18 *HomGen* 8,1.

19 Gen 17:5.

Origen dwells in the expression «into the high land» (εἰς τὴν γῆν τὴν ὑψηλὴν) in Gen 22:2, a phrase not found in the Hebrew, which has instead «land of Moriah», and translated as *in terram visionis* in the Vulgate. For Origen, who like Philo accepted the idea of the inspiration of the Septuagint, the phrase serves to show how Abraham's test is augmented. He is enjoined to go into the high land and also to ascend a mountain «that in all these things there might be a period of struggle between affection and faith, love of God and love of the flesh, the charm of things present and the expectation of things future».²⁰ The hermeneutical key here is the moral level of interpretation, which had been amply developed by Philo and which Origen is able to weave together skillfully with the Christological interpretation.

The following verse offers precisely such an opportunity. The text reads: «And he came to the place which the Lord had said to him, on the third day».²¹ The mention of «the third day» causes Origen to exclaim: «The third day, however, is always applied to mysteries. For also when the people had departed from Egypt, they offer sacrifice to God on the third day and are purified on the third day.²² And the third day is the day of the Lord's resurrection.²³ Many other mysteries are also included within this day».²⁴ The mention of the third day provides Origen with point of transition to the Christological interpretation, which in turn is the key to removing the scandal involved in the sacrifice of Isaac, a scandal only partially removed by dwelling on the moral aspects of Abraham's «test». For him the allusion to the Resurrection of Jesus was obvious. In verse 5 Abraham says to the servants «when we have worshipped, we will return to you», which provides a new dilemma. Either Abraham is deceiving the servants, which is unfitting for a patriarch, or he is telling the truth, which means that he knows something that he is not yet disclosing. The dilemma is resolved for Origen by Abraham's faith in the resurrection, which is confirmed by Hebrews 11:19, where it is stated that Abraham had reasoned in reference to this chapter of Genesis that God was able to raise from the dead.

The same phrase, «the third day», in the same verse of Genesis, however, had been given a quite different interpretation on the moral level by Clement of Alexandria. For him the phrase offered the opportunity to describe three

20 *HomGen* 8,3.

21 Gen 22:3.

22 Cf. Exod. 19:11, 15, 16; 24:5.

23 1 Cor 15:4; Matt 27:63.

24 *HomGen* 8,4.

phases of the spiritual journey: the first day is that of the life of beautiful things, the second signifies the desire of the soul that is turned toward the supreme good, and the third day the intellect perceives the spiritual realities, since the eyes of the thought have been opened by the master who rose on the third day.²⁵ Here too we have a skillful weaving of the moral (with Platonic influence) and christological levels of interpretation based on a detail of the text that, read in the context of the narrative of the sacrifice of Isaac, originally had no such significance at all.

Before leaving this phenomenon and the text of Genesis 22, I would like to mention one more detail. Gen 22:6 states: «Abraham took the wood for the holocaust and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took the fire in his own hands and a sword, and they went off together».²⁶ The phrase «they went off together» has no particular significance in the original narrative. But Origen has already determined that «the wood for the holocaust» is a figure because Christ carried his own cross and to carry the wood for the holocaust is also the duty of a priest. Christ is thus both victim and priest. For this reason he is able to invest the single word «together» (ἄμα) with great theological significance. Isaac does not go behind Abraham but with him so that he might be shown to contribute equally with the priesthood itself.²⁷

Lying behind the assumption that there is a «treasure in the details» is the idea that the real redactor of the Scriptures and hence of all the details is the Holy Spirit. Origen states this rather explicitly in fact: «On this account we must explain to those who believe that the sacred books are not the works of men, but that they were composed and have come down to us as a result of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by the will of the Father of the universe through Jesus Christ».²⁸ The rules of interpretation that he goes on to elaborate are based on this primary assumption about the nature of the text, that the text has a hidden or esoteric meaning.

25 *Strom.* 5,11,73: πρώτη μὲν γὰρ ἡ δι' ὅψεως τῶν καλῶν ἡμέρα, δευτέρα δὲ ἡ ψυχῆς <τῶν> ἀρίστων ἐπιθυμία, τῇ τρίτῃ δὲ ὁ νοῦς τὰ πνευματικὰ διορᾷ, διοιχθέντων τῶν τῆς διανοίας ὀμμάτων πρὸς τοῦ τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ διαναστάντος διδασκάλου.

26 *LXX*: ἔλαβεν δὲ Ἀβραὰμ τὰ ξύλα τῆς ὀλοκαρπώσεως καὶ ἐπέθηκεν Ἰσαὰκ τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ· ἔλαβεν δὲ καὶ τὸ πῦρ μετὰ χεῖρα καὶ τὴν μάχαιραν, καὶ ἐπορεύθησαν οἱ δύο ἄμα.

27 *HomGen* 8,6.

28 *PArch* 4,2,2: διόπερ τοῖς πειθομένοις μὴ ἀνθρώπων εἶναι συγγράμματα τὰς ἱερὰς βίβλους, ἀλλ' ἐξ ἐπιπνοίας τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος βουλήματι τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ταῦτας ἀναγεγράφθαι καὶ εἰς ἡμᾶς ἐληλυθέναι.

4. NOT «HISTORY» BUT «MYSTERY»

Later in Origen's homilies on Genesis there occurs a passage that shows the same interest in the treasures to be found in the details, but with some observations that throw additional light on his assumptions:

We should observe in reading the holy Scriptures how «to go up» and «to go down» are employed in each individual passage. For if we were to give diligent consideration, we would discover that almost never is anyone said to have gone down to an holy place nor is anyone related to have gone up to a blameworthy place. These observations show that the divine Scripture was not composed, as it seems to most, in illiterate and uncultivated language, but was adapted in accordance with the discipline of divine instruction. Nor is Scripture devoted so much to historical narratives as to things and ideas which are mystical. You will find it written, therefore, that those who are born of the seed of Abraham have gone down into Egypt and again that the sons of Israel have gone up out of Egypt. Indeed Scripture speaks thus also of Abraham himself: «But Abraham went up out of Egypt into the desert, he and his wife and all that was his, and Lot with him» (Gen 13:1).²⁹

This text contains a number of fascinating elements. First of all we may note the sense of embarrassment already seen earlier in regard to the literal level of the text. The text does seem to be in illiterate and uncultivated language, but in reality follows a method of divine instruction that does not correspond to human methods. It is not a human, but a divine composition. Secondly, however, there is present an idea that we have not yet seen: the obvious historical narrative is not really about history but about mystical ideas.³⁰ The text is being de-historicized, to use a modern expression. This idea is not original to Origen; it is found already in Philo. Commenting on Gen 11:31, Philo explains:

29 *HomGen* 15,1; the translation is from ORIGEN, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, tr. R.E. Heine (The Fathers of the Church 71), Washington, D.C. 1982, 203.

30 A similar statement is found in *PArch* 4,3,1: ἐὰν δὲ καὶ 'θεὸς τὸ δειλινὸν ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ περιπατεῖν' λέγεται καὶ 'ὁ Ἀδὰμ ὑπὸ τὸ ξύλον κρύπτεσθαι', οὐκ οἶμαι διστάζειν τινὰ περὶ τοῦ αὐτὰ τροπικῶς διὰ δοκούσης ἱστορίας καὶ οὐ σωματικῶς γεγεννημένης μηνύειν τινὰ μυστήρια. «And when God is said to "walk in the paradise in the cool of the day" and Adam to hide himself behind a tree, I do not think anyone will doubt that these are figurative expressions which indicate certain mysteries through a semblance of history and not through actual events». The English translation of the Greek text is from: ORIGEN, *On First Principles*, tr. - ed. G.W. Butterworth, Gloucester, Mass. 1966, 288.

The information that Terah left the land of the Chaldaeans and migrated to Haran, taking with him his son Abraham and his kindred, is given us not with the object that we may learn as from a writer of history, that certain people became emigrants, leaving the land of their ancestors, and making a foreign land their home and country, but that a lesson well suited to man and of great service to human life may not be neglected.³¹

«What is this lesson?» asks Philo, and there follows an extraordinary passage, too long to quote here, in which he explains that the appropriate study for mankind is not the facts of nature, the exploration of the heavens, but rather the human subject. «Mark, my friend, not what is above and beyond your reach but what is close to yourself, or rather make yourself the object of your impartial scrutiny».³² This is supported by a quotation from the *Odyssey* 4,392 «All that exists of good and ill in the halls of your homestead». In this reproof there is an evident allusion to Plato's *Theaetetus* 174a where Socrates recounts the jest of the Thracian handmaid about Thales «who was so eager to know what was going on in the heaven, that he could not see what was before his feet» and therefore fell into a well while looking up at the stars. After this Philo declares «But bring the explorer down from heaven and away from these researches draw the "Know thyself", and then lavish the same careful toil on this too». Then he concludes by declaring that what the Hebrews call «Terah», the Greeks call «Socrates».³³ Thus the story of the migration of Terah is not about history, but about the basic philosophical truth or quest for self-knowledge embodied in that most famous of all aphorisms attributed to the Delphic Oracle. Neither history nor natural science can provide the truth that is really useful.

In other places Philo makes it clear that he regards history as belonging to the propaedeutic studies.³⁴ In his allegory on the story of Sarah and Hagar, Hagar represents the preliminary studies that must be sent away at the request of Sarah

31 *Somn.* 1,52. *Philo* 5, ed. F.H. Colson - G.H. Whitaker (LCL 275), Cambridge, Mass. 1934, 23: καταλιπὼν μέντοι τὴν Χαλδαίαν γῆν εἰς Χαρρὰν λέγεται μετανίστασθαι Θάρρα, τὸν τε υἱὸν Ἀβραὰμ καὶ τοὺς ὁμογνίους τῆς οἰκίας ἐπαγόμενος, οὐχ ἴν' ὥς παρὰ συγγραφέως ἱστορικοῦ μάθωμεν, ὅτι μετανάσται τινὲς ἐγένοντο, τὴν μὲν πατρῶαν γῆν καταλιπόντες, τὴν δὲ ξένην ὥς πατρίδα οἰκήσαντες, ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ τοῦ μᾶθημα βιωφελέστατον καὶ ἀρμόττον ἀνθρώπων μὴ ἀμεληθῆναι.

32 *Somn.* 1,54. *Philo* 5, 325.

33 *Somn.* 1,57-58. *Philo* 5, 327.

34 *Congr.* 15; 44.

representing philosophy.³⁵ A passage from the *Life of Moses* is particularly instructive for understanding Philo's attitude toward history:

We must now give the reason why he began his law book with the history, and put the commands and prohibitions in the second place. He did not, like any historian, make it his business to leave behind for posterity records of ancient deeds for the pleasant but unimproving entertainment which they give; but, in relating the history of early times, and going for its beginning right to the creation of the universe, he wished to show two essential things: first that the Father and Maker of the world was in the truest sense also its lawgiver, secondly that he who would observe the laws will accept gladly the duty of following nature and live in accordance with the ordering of the universe, so that his deeds are attuned to harmony with his words and his words with his deeds.³⁶

Moses for Philo is essentially the law, the law that is perennially valid. As such it has no history. The question then is why Moses would begin his law book with an historical account which deals as Philo says, «with the creation of the world», «with particular persons», «with the punishment of the impious», and «with the honoring of the just».³⁷ Philo's question is genuine and reveals the difficulty for the ancient philosophical mind to relate what is perennially valid and universal with what is contingent and particular. History is contingent and particular. Aristotle in particular had excluded history from the realm of genuine knowledge, which is concerned rather with the necessary and universal.³⁸ History acquires value (or usefulness) by its relationship to the perennial and universal, by showing that «the Father and Maker of the world» is also its lawgiver and by showing that «he who would observe the laws will accept gladly the duty of following nature and live in accordance with the ordering of the universe». In these words we may also discern a strong Stoic influence. Follow-

35 *Congr.* 71-80; 180; et passim.

36 *Mos.* II, 47-48. *Philo* 6 (LCL 289), tr. F.H. Colson, Cambridge, Mass. 1935, 470-471.

37 *Mos.* II, 47.

38 Aristotle, *Poetics* 11:1451b: «Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars. By a universal statement I mean one as to what such or such a kind of man will probably or necessarily say or do – which is the aim of poetry, though it affixes proper names to the characters; by a singular statement, one as to what, say, Alcibiades did or had done to him». *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. R. McKeon, New York 1941, 1464. For a recent treatment of the concept of history, see: R. KOSELLECK, «Geschichte, Historie», in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* 2, Stuttgart 1979, 593-717.

ing nature and living in accordance with the ordering of the universe are typical Stoic concepts.³⁹ For the ancient Stoa history held little or no interest. Truth is timeless.⁴⁰ This attitude strongly influenced the interpretation of Homer as well. For the later Stoa history acquired value as it intuited a divine order which gave sense to history.⁴¹ History, by showing this divine order, could also give moral instruction. Philo reflects these values and Origen is his inheritor.

We must return now to the quotation from Origen's homily on Genesis that was the point of departure for this consideration of the concept of history. «Nor», he says, «is Scripture devoted so much to historical narratives as to things and ideas which are mystical». The same term and idea is found also in the phrase «the precious jewels of the mysteries» already quoted from Origen's eighth homily on Genesis. For illustrating Origen's use of this term, his Homily 27 on Numbers is particularly useful. Having already established at the beginning of the homily that the Exodus can be understood in a double spiritual sense as referring either to leaving our life as Gentiles or to the soul leaving the body, Origen states, «But first of all contemplate the reckoning up of the mystery. If one examines as carefully as possible, he will find in the Scriptures that there are forty-two stages in the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt; and, further, the coming of our Lord and Saviour into this world is traced through forty-two generations».⁴² The latter is a reference to the genealogy found in Matthew's Gospel. The number forty-two constitutes the mystery; it conceals and reveals when deciphered correctly both the reality of the divine dispensation in Christ and the ascent of the soul to God. Thus the two levels of spiritual and christological interpretation can be woven together. Origen concludes: «If you have understood how great a mystery that number of the descent and the ascent contains, then come and let us begin to ascend through the stages by which Christ descended, and make that the first stage which He passed last of all, namely when He was born of the Virgin». Further on, with reference to the continued pursuit by the Egyptians, Origen exclaims: «Who will be found worthy and so understanding of the divine mysteries that he can describe the stages of that journey and ascent of the soul and explain either the toils or the rest of

39 Cf. M. POHLENZ, *La Stoa, Storia di un movimento spirituale 1*, Firenze 1967, 57ff., 238-241.

40 A. BORST, *Der Turmbau von Babel. Geschichte der Meinungen über Ursprung und Vielfalt der Sprachen und Völker 1*, Stuttgart 1957, 138.

41 POHLENZ, *La Stoa, Storia di un movimento spirituale 1*, 428-433.

42 *HomNum* 27,3.

each different place?» This means of course the forty-two stopping places in the desert. He continues, «But, as I have said, I do not know who would dare to explain the stages one by one and also to guess at the special properties of the stages by contemplating their names. I am uncertain whether the understanding of the preacher would be sufficient for such weighty mysteries or the hearing of the listeners capable of understanding».⁴³ Further on Origen comments in reference to the defeat of the demons: «But worse than any other sorts of torments for them and worse than any other punishment is if they see someone giving his attention to the Word of God by seeking out the mysteries of the Scriptures with attentive exertions».⁴⁴ Seeking out the mysteries means deciphering the letter in order to find the spiritual content. Many other passages could be cited from Origen to illustrate this concept of mystery.⁴⁵

The term mystery had been employed extensively by Paul to indicate God's plan or dispensation revealed in Jesus Christ.⁴⁶ Origen of course knows and cites these passages from Paul, but Philo to whom, as already noted, Origen is deeply indebted had already developed the idea of Scripture itself as containing or covering mysteries extensively. In his tractate on the Cherubim, after explaining the allegorical significance of Sarah, Rachel and Lia as referring to the conception and generation of virtue, Philo notes that, on hearing this explanation, the superstitious close their ears or go away, «but we, in fact, are teaching divine mysteries to the initiates worthy of the most sacred mysteries».⁴⁷ After expounding this meaning of the texts further, he concludes:

Accept these facts, O you initiates who have purified your ears, into your souls as authentic sacred mysteries and do not speak of them with any of the non-initiated, but administer and preserve them in yourselves like a treasure, not a treasure in which are found gold and silver, corruptible substances, but the most beautiful of all possessions, the knowledge that has as its object the Cause and virtue, and thirdly the fruit of their union.⁴⁸

⁴³ *HomNum* 27,4.

⁴⁴ *HomNum* 27,8.

⁴⁵ For similar observations about the distinction of «history» and real spiritual content, see *HomEx* 1,5 and 2,1.

⁴⁶ P.T. O'BRIEN, «Mystery», in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. G.F. Hawthorne - R.P. Martin - D.G. Reid, Downers Grove, Il. 1993, 622.

⁴⁷ *Cher.* 42: τελετὰς γὰρ ἀναδιδάσκομεν θείας τοὺς τελετῶν ἀξίους τῶν ἱεροτάτων μύστας.

⁴⁸ *Cher.* 48: ταῦτα, ὧ μύσται κεκαθαρμένοι τὰ ὄψα, ὡς ἱερὰ ὄντως μυστήρια ψυχῆς ταῖς ἑαυτῶν παραδέχεσθε καὶ μηδενὶ τῶν ἀμυήτων ἐκλαλήσητε, ταμειυσάμενοι δὲ παρ' ἑαυτοῖς

Philo goes on to refer to himself as one who has been initiated into the great mysteries of Moses, the friend of God.⁴⁹ Elsewhere Moses himself is described as one initiated into the mysteries, which have to do with the priesthood and the construction of the tabernacle.⁵⁰ All of these of course, for Philo, require an allegorical explanation in order to be deciphered. Moses is also frequently described by Philo as a hierophant (ὁ ἱεροφάντης), a teacher of sacred mysteries.⁵¹ All of this language, which abounds in Philo, is redolent of the language of the Greek mystery cults.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

We began by noting how Origen's theory of the nature of Sacred Scripture is focused on the identity of the logos operative in Scripture with the Logos incarnate. The Scriptures in their entirety speak about Christ. He is the key to their interpretation. To know the Scriptures, by interpreting them correctly of course, is to know Christ. However, when we look more closely we find that Origen's concept of Scripture (as well as that of many other Christian interpreters) is determined in practice by several other elements or ideas about Scripture that he has in common with Philo and other non-Christian interpreters. These include the concept of God or «what is worthy of God» as a key to interpreting texts, the notion that the Scriptures are not human compositions, but divine ones and thus may not follow the rules of human composition, the notion that there is a treasure to be found in the details, the notion that the stories in Scripture are not principally history, but contain perennial truths, and finally the notion of mystery. To these could be added others as well such as the notion of the «useful» and the concept of the Scriptures as «oracles». In short, the concept of Scripture in early Christian interpretation owes much to the Hellenistic world in which it developed.

φυλάττετε θησαυρόν, οὐκ ἐν ᾧ χρυσὸς καὶ ἄργυρος, οὐσίαι φθαρταί, κατάκεινται, ἀλλὰ τῶν ὄντων κτημάτων τὸ καλλιστεῦον, ἡ περὶ τοῦ αἰτίου καὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ τρίτου τοῦ γεννήματος ἀμφοῖν ἐπιστήμη.

49 *Cher.* 49.

50 *Mos.* II, 71.

51 E.g., *Somn.* II, 109; *Deus* 156,4.

RHETORICAL STRUCTURE IN COPTIC SERMONS

Although a significant number of Coptic sermons¹ have been published in the last fifty years, very little attention has been devoted to the literary and rhetorical analysis of this form of literature since the publications of C.D.G. Müller.² It may therefore be useful to begin by summarizing the state of the question as Müller left it.

After tracing the development of the Greek sermon (*Predigt*) from the New Testament to the fifth century (Cyril of Alexandria, Theodoret of Cyrrus),³ Müller investigated four groups of Coptic «sermons». The first group consists of homilies on biblical themes, the second of sermons on angels, the third of works devoted to the Virgin Mary and the fourth contains works devoted to

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- 1 In modern English usage (as in other modern languages) no clear distinction is made between the terms «sermon» and «homily» (see the *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v.). In Christian antiquity, however, the term «homily» usually referred to a specific text-based form of preaching of which two types can be distinguished, the exegetical homily and the thematic homily. In the former type the preacher seeks to expound the meaning of the text, citing it and following it in order. In the second type, he takes the text as his point of departure, but does not necessarily follow the order of the text in his exposition. See T. STEIGER, «Homilie», in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* 3, ed. G. Ueding, Darmstadt 1996, 1510-1521. In the present article the term «sermon» is used as a generic modern category for all forms of ancient preaching or fictive preaching and the term «homily» is reserved for text-based sermons. However, it must be admitted that even in antiquity, at least in Coptic, the distinction was not always so clear, as will be noted below. On the history of the «homily», see M. SACHOT, «Homilie», in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 16, 148-175. See also: A. OLIVAR, *La Predicación Cristiana Antigua*, BH 189, Barcelona 1991; H. OLIPHANT OLD, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church 1. The Patristic Age*, Grand Rapids, Mich. 1998.
 - 2 C.D.G. MÜLLER, *Die alte koptische Predigt (Versuch eines Überblicks)*, Ph.D. diss., Heidelberg 1953; Darmstadt 1954; *idem*, «Einige Bemerkungen zur „ars praedicandi“ der alten koptischen Kirche», *Le Muséon* 67 (1954) 231-270; *idem*, «Koptische Redekunst und Griechische Rhetorik», *Le Muséon* 69 (1956) 53-72. See also *idem*, «Koptische Homiletik», in *Kindlers Literatur Lexikon* 6, ed. W. von Einsiedel - G. Woerner, Zürich 1970, 5339-42, a shorter summary of earlier positions.
 - 3 MÜLLER, *Die alte koptische Predigt*, 4-21. The authors are not treated in chronological order. Thus Eusebius of Caesarea follows at the end after Cyril of Alexandria and Theodoret.

the saints. The total number of sermons described or analyzed comes to about twenty-six. Many of these sermons, especially in the first category, are in the Bohairic dialect, which means that at least in their present form they are not earlier than the ninth century.⁴ The earliest of those analyzed would be the ones attributed to Athanasius, if the attribution were correct and not pseudepigraphical. We would be dealing then with a period of almost five hundred years, a period in which significant internal and external events impinged on the life of the Egyptian church.

In his general conclusions, Müller noted the importance of two «pillars» for the Coptic art of preaching, exhortations and stories (*Ermahnungen* and *Erzählungen*).⁵ For the broad masses in Egypt exegesis and speculation were never a goal in themselves. Rather, raising the moral level of the congregation was the principal concern of the preacher. Consequently the Coptic preacher had no interest in rhetoric as such. His discourse is simple, without ornament, and avoids all play with words such as one finds in the rhetorical style of Greek preaching. Conversely, the stories introduced by the Coptic preacher are missing in Greek preaching. Müller observes that the homilies as we have them were edited and gathered together in volumes for liturgical use, for reading during the liturgical services in monasteries, and that we possess only a small portion of the Coptic literature that once existed. He notes as well the great length of some of these writings, which would have lasted up to two hours if actually preached, but insists that this was normal in antiquity.

In an article published two years later, Müller sketched the development of Greek rhetoric and, relying on the analysis of Norden, Volkmann and others,⁶ remarked that Greek prose rhetoric was essentially poetry transposed into prose.

4 See A. SHISHA-HALEVY, «Bohairic», in *The Coptic Encyclopedia* 8, ed. A.S. Atiya, New York 1991, 53-60, who notes that the old controversial question over the origins of Bohairic as a literary dialect remains unresolved. However, there are no literary manuscripts older than the tenth century other than biblical fragments. According to Lefort, the origins of Bohairic as a literary dialect are to be found in the reconstruction of the library of St. Macarius in the ninth century. See L.-TH. LEFORT, «Littérature bohairique», *Le Muséon* 44 (1931) 115-35.

5 MÜLLER, *Die alte koptische Predigt*, 343. The conclusions are summarized and repeated in his article, «Einige Bemerkungen».

6 E. NORDEN, *Die antike Kunstprosa vom VI. Jahrhundert v. Chr. bis in die Zeit der Renaissance* 1-2, Leipzig 1923; R. VOLKMANN, *Rhetorik der Griechen und Römer*, (Handbuch der klassischen Altertums-Wissenschaft 2.3), ed. C. Hammer, München ³1901. The latter work has since been replaced by J. MARTIN, *Antike Rhetorik, Technik und Methode*, (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft 2.3), München 1974.

As later standardized, Greek (and Latin) rhetoric fell into three distinct categories: that intended for the assembly, for the courts (forensic) and the epideictic.⁷ Later were added the encomium and the panegyric. Precise canons for these were developed, which included the internal divisions and the use of a variety of ornaments, comparisons, tropes and figures. Müller insisted that, although there were never manuals of rhetoric in Coptic, there was in fact an established canon of preaching that the young priest would learn. This would have included a proper introduction and conclusion and a few types of discourse such as «argumentation», but as far as the influence of Greek rhetorical style goes, it was practically nil.⁸ The Coptic preacher used long stories to illustrate the moral exhortation. The typical features of Greek rhetoric such as irony, sarcasm, plays on words, etc. are absent from Coptic preaching, and if they are found, should be regarded as non-Egyptian. Although he admitted the difficulty of even sketching a history of Coptic rhetoric, Müller insisted also on distinguishing between monastic literature (intended for a monastic audience) and preaching for a more general public. Shenoute would be the principal representative of the former. As the Coptic church became progressively a monastic church and the older form of discourse addressed only to monks became less frequent, the miracle story seems to have quickly conquered the field.⁹

From the perspective of fifty years later, Müller's pioneering investigations and conclusions pose some serious problems of methodology. First of all, the juxtaposition of works produced in a time period of over five hundred years without a serious effort to locate them in their historical setting makes it impossible to detect or speak of development. The whole group of Bohairic pieces needs to be treated separately from the Sahidic literature. The former may indeed be a witness to earlier literature transposed from Sahidic into Bohairic, but without specific analysis, Bohairic cannot be used as a witness to the period before the Arab conquest. The few cases where we have comparable pieces in

7 These divisions go back in fact to Aristotle. For a useful discussion of Aristotle's rhetorical theory, see G.A. KENNEDY, *Classical Rhetoric and its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*, Chapel Hill, N.C. ²1999, 74-93; see also H. LAUSBERG, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, Stuttgart ³1990, §§59-65.

8 MÜLLER, «Koptische Redekunst», 58.

9 MÜLLER, «Koptische Redekunst», 70-71.

Sahidic and Bohairic show such considerable reworking that it would be better to say that the Bohairic version was inspired by the Sahidic.¹⁰

Another problem is posed by the large amount of material that is pseudoe-pigraphical, that is, falsely attributed either deliberately or through accident of transmission. Many of the homilies analyzed by Müller fall into these categories. However, it belongs to the very nature of such works (deliberate false attribution) that they were never intended to be delivered orally, at least not by the persons to whom they are attributed. In many cases the false attribution cannot be simply a case of mistaken attribution or errors of transmission, since the fictive authorship is built into the construction of the literary pieces. Such is the case with the compositions attributed to Evodius, which will be discussed below. The whole question of the reasons for the existence of this large body of literature in Coptic has never been dealt with adequately.¹¹

Given the fact that a significant portion of the «homiletic» literature falls into this category, one must pose the question also of literary genre. Müller did not attempt to define the category «Predigt» and perhaps with good reason. It may not be possible to do so in a satisfactory way.¹² Nevertheless, some effort must be made to distinguish the different literary genres and sub-genres in this category. The material that Müller analyzed was designated by a number of labels in antiquity including ΛΟΓΟΣ, ΖΟΜΙΛΙΑ, ΕΞΕΓΗCIC, ΕΓΚΩΜΙΟΝ, ΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΑ, ΒΙΟΣ, ΠΟΛΥΤΙΑ, ΚΑΘΗΚΗCIC.¹³ Whether all of these terms

10 Such is the case with the two homilies (Sahidic and Bohairic) attributed to Evodius of Rome. On the relationship of these, see M. SHERIDAN, «A Homily on the Death of the Virgin Mary attributed to Evodius of Rome», in this volume, 135-147.

11 The most important study to appear in the last fifty years on this subject is that by W. SPEYER, *Die literarische Fälschung im heidnischen und christlichen Altertum. Ein Versuch Ihrer Deutung*, München 1971. See also W. SPEYER, «Fälschung, pseudoepigraphische freie Erfindung und "echte" religiöse Pseudepigraphie», in *Pseudepigrapha 1*, ed. K. von Fritz, Vandouevres-Geneve 1972, 331-66. For a hypothesis regarding the reasons for the pseudoe-pigraphical homilies by Evodius, see my article mentioned in note 10.

12 SACHOT («Homilie», 148) gives a working definition of «homily» (for his article) as: «die Ansprache im Anschluß an die gottesdienstliche Verlesung biblischer Schriften». Such a definition would exclude many of the compositions analysed by Müller.

13 MÜLLER, *Die alte koptische Predigt*, 303-4. Müller himself used the term «Homilie» to indicate more than text-based preaching. In this he was following ancient usage. See pp. 34-35, 83, 284. In Coptic the most common designation of text-based homilies seems to have been ΛΟΓΟΣ. The designation of the homilies on Matthew by Rufus of Shotep is ΛΟΓΟΣ, but those on Luke are designated by ΕΞΕΓΗCIC. See J.M. SHERIDAN, *Rufus of Shotep. Homilies on the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Introduction, Text, Translation, Commentary*, Roma 1998, Coptic index, s.v.

should be grouped together under the heading of «sermon» or «homily» (or *Predigt* in German) may be questioned. From the point of view of literary genre and rhetorical style, the one thing that they may have in common is that they were all compositions intended somehow for liturgical use. But in terms of literary genre and the rhetorical style associated with diverse genres, they may be quite different. Müller himself was well aware that the material that he had studied did not represent the actual text or form of sermons as they had been delivered.¹⁴ However, he does not seem to have understood (or at least did not indicate clearly) that a great many of them were not composed for delivery, but rather to provide material for public reading in a liturgical context.

Only a careful analysis of the language used in homilies can provide clues regarding the time frame in which they were composed and the purpose of the authors. Many of the Coptic authors were quite sensitive to correct theological language. For example, Rufus of Shotep (end of the sixth century/beginning of the seventh) warns his congregation: «He is a son, beloved, for whom your mind needs a terminological security lest robbers or thieves punch holes in the door of your faith and carry off the riches of your nobility».¹⁵ Rufus also uses a number of other phrases that reflect at least a post-Chalcedonian terminology.¹⁶ Similarly, the homilies attributed to Evodius of Rome exhibit concerns that are certainly post-Chalcedonian and, more likely, attributable to the time of Damian (578-604).¹⁷

Given the current state of research, the lengthy time period involved, and the lack of detailed analysis of the texts available, it is very hazardous to make generalizations about the nature of the Coptic «homily». Only detailed examination of the terminology, of the literary genre, and of the rhetorical style can aid in developing a more reliable and articulated over-view of the development of this literature and of its historical function. Müller himself noted that a more exact knowledge of Coptic methods of composition and rhetorical forms might help to solve many disputed questions of origin and help to piece together many fragments.¹⁸ However, since his contributions very little has been added in the way of concrete analysis and, unfortunately, as he also observed, the way in which Coptic texts have been published often obscures

14 MÜLLER, «Einige Bemerkungen», 268.

15 SHERIDAN, *Rufus of Shotep*, 232.

16 SHERIDAN, *Rufus of Shotep*, 53-57

17 See SHERIDAN, «A Homily on the Death of the Virgin Mary».

18 MÜLLER, «Koptische Redekunst», 54, 57.

rather than illuminates the rhetorical structure of the pieces.¹⁹ Indeed the form in which the homilies are presented in the manuscripts may often be much more revealing about the compositional methods of the author and the way he conceived the form of the work. The rest of this article will be devoted to some specific examples of rhetorical analysis that might serve to improve methodology in this field.

TWO SERMONS ATTRIBUTED TO ATHANASIUS

Among the sermons examined by Müller is one attributed to Athanasius entitled «The Resurrection of Lazarus» by the editor²⁰ and *De Lazaro e mortuis reuocato* in the Clavis²¹ where it is classified under «dubia». It is a text-based homily in the strict sense.²² There is in fact no known Greek text which corresponds to it and the homily is contained in only one manuscript in the Morgan collection dated 855.²³ Müller described the content of the homily, but without noting its precise rhetorical characteristics, except to observe that it showed strong Greek influence and lacked what he considered typical Coptic elements such as the moral exhortations and catalogues of vices.²⁴ There is no doubt that the homily makes use of typically Greek rhetorical devices, but whether or not one can clearly distinguish what is Greek and what is Coptic in Coptic sermons is a more difficult question. Even if there were no manuals of rhetoric available in Coptic, there were available translations of classical examples of rhetorical style such as the sermons of Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, Pseudo-Epiphanius²⁵ and Proclus of Con-

19 MÜLLER, «Koptische Redekunst», 58.

20 J.B. BERNARDIN, «The Resurrection of Lazarus», *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 57 (1940) 262-90.

21 CPG 2185; Coptic clavis 0049.

22 See note 1 above.

23 L. DEPUYDT, *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library* (Corpus of Illuminated Manuscripts 4-5), Leuven 1993, no. 170, 8 (p. 348). The manuscript is M595, ff.108r - 118r.

24 MÜLLER, *Die alte koptische Predigt*, 90-7.

25 MÜLLER, *Die alte koptische Predigt*, 193, 217-23, included one of the Pseudo-Epiphanius sermons in his analysis, apparently not realizing that it was a translation from the Greek and noting that it was very Greek in style. For observations on the style of Pseudo-Epiphanius, see H. STANDER, «Stylistic Devices and Homiletic Techniques in Ps.-Epiphanius' Festal Sermons», in *Nova et Vetera. Patristic Studies in Honor of Thomas Patrick Halton*, ed. J. Petruccione, Washington, D.C.1998, 96-114.

stantinople.²⁶ The dating of these translations is of course difficult, but some were probably available by the late fourth or early fifth century.

The homily on Lazarus begins with an elaborate exordium (proemium), a stylistic feature that can be found in other Coptic homilies. The purpose of the exordium in general is to capture the attention of the listeners for the subject to be treated.²⁷ This exordium is composed of two anaphoras,²⁸ the first of which contains a description (*ecphrasis*) of the parts of Christ's body and of his actions:

ΝΒΑΛ ΜΠΧΟΕΙC ΖΕΝΑΚΤΙΝ ΝΟΥΘΕΙΝ ΝΕ · ΕΥΡΟΥΘΕΙΝ ΕΝ-
ΕΤΖΜΠΚΑΚΕ ΜΝΘΑΙΒC ΜΠΜΟΥ ·

ΠΛΑC ΜΠΧC ΕΦΜΕΖ ΝΩΝΖ ΝΟΥΟΝ ΝΙΜ ΝΤΑΠΜΟΥ ΡΧΟΕΙC
ΕΧΩΟΥ ·

ΝΘΙΧ ΜΠΕΧC ΖΕΝΡΕCΤΑΝΖΟ ΝΕ · ΕΦΑCΤΤΟΟΤΟΥ ΝΟΥΟΝ
ΝΙΜ ΝCΤΑΖΟΟΥ ΕΡΑΤΟΥ ·

ΝΖΟΙΤΕ ΜΠΕΧC ΖΕΝΡΕCΤΑΝΖΟ ΝΕ · ΕΦΑΥΘΕΡΑΠΕΥΕ
ΝΝΕΖΙΟ[ΜΕ] [108v] ΕΡΕΠΕCΝΟΥ ΖΑΡΟΥ ·

ΝΕΟΥΕΡΗΤΕ ΜΠΕΧC ΖΕΝΡΕCΚΩΤΕ ΝΕ ΝCΑ ΝΕCΟΥ
ΝΤΑΥCΩΡΜ ΕCΚΤΟ ΜΜΟΥ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕΤΑΥΛΗ ΕΤΝΑΝΟΥC ·

ΠΟΥΕΖCΑΖΝΕ ΜΠΕΧC · ΟΥΡΕCΤΑΛΔΟ ΠΕ · ΕΦΑCΤΑΛΔΟ
ΝΕΤCΟΒΖ ΝCΚΑΘΑΡΙΖΕ ΜΜΟΥ ·

ΜΠΑΔCΕ ΕΤΝΖΟΥΝ ΕΡΩC ΜΠΕΧC · ΖΕΝΚΟΛΛΗΡΙΟΝ ΜΠΑΖΡΕ
ΝΕ ΝΡΕCΤΠΟΥΘΕΙΝ ΕΦΑCΤΠΟΥΘΕΙΝ ΕΝΒΑΛ ΜΠΒΑΛΕ ΜΜΙCΕ ·

ΤΟΙΝΩΩΤ ΜΠΕΧC ΟΥΡΕCΤΩΝΖ ΤΕ · ΑCΩΩΤ ΕΠΩΗΡΕ
ΝΤΕΧΗΡΑ · ΕΥCΙ ΜΜΟΥ ΕΒΟΛ ΕCΜΟΥΤ ΑCΤΠΩΝΖ ΝΑC ·

ΤΟΙΧ ΜΠΕΧC ΟΥΡΕCΤΕΖΜΡΩΜΕ ΕΠΩΝΖ ΤΕ · ΑCΕΙ ΕC-
ΜΟΩΦΕ ΕCΤΩΖΜ

ΝΝΕCΑΠΟCΤΟΛΟC ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕΤΜΝΤΕΡΟ ΝΝΜΠΗΥΕ ··

ΤΟΙΝΠΑΡΑΓΕ ΜΠΕΧC ΟΥΖΗΥ ΤΕ ΕCΠΑΡΑΓΕ ΔΕ ΑCΤΠΟΥΘΕΙΝ
ΕΒΑΛΕ CΝΑΥ ΕΥΖΙΤΕΖΙΗ :~

ΜΜΝΤΩΝΖΤΗC ΜΠΕΧC ΖΕΝΑΤΧΙΗΠΕ ΜΜΟΥ ΝΕ · ΑCΩ-
ΑΝΖΤΗC ΓΑΡ ΖΑΤΟΥ

26 In addition to the authentic sermons of these authors translated into Coptic, other compositions were attributed to them in Coptic. See the Coptic clavis of T. Orlandi (<http://rmcisadu.let.uniroma1.it/~cmcl/>) for lists of both types, and also T. ORLANDI, «Cycle», in *The Coptic Encyclopedia* 3, ed. A.S. Atiya, New York 1991, 666-8.

27 On the exordium in general and its varieties, see LAUSBERG, *Handbuch*, §§263-288; K. SCHÖPSDAU, «Exordium», in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* 3, ed. G. Ueding, Darmstadt 1996, 136-40.

28 For the rhetorical device of anaphora, see C. BLASBERG, «Anapher», in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* 1, ed. G. Ueding, Darmstadt 1992, 542-545.

ΝΩΟ ΝΡΩΜΕ ΕΥΖΚΑΕΙΤ· ΑΥΩΖΕ ΝΤΟΥ ΝΟΕΙΚ ΝΕΙΩΤ · ΑΧΤΡΕΥΟΥ-
ΩΜ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΑΥCĪ :~

The eyes of the Lord are rays of light lighting up those who are in the «darkness and the shadow of death» (Luke 1:79).

The tongue of Christ is full of life for everyone over whom death has ruled.

The hands of Christ are life giving, with which he gives a hand to all and sets them on their feet.

The garments of Christ are life-giving, healing the women with hemorrhages (cf. Matt 9:20-22; Mark 9:25-34; Luke 8:43-48).

The feet of Christ are seekers after the strayed sheep, which he brings back to the good sheepfold (John 10:16; Luke 15:6).

The commandment of Christ is a healer, with which He heals those who are leprous and cleanses them (cf. Luke 5:12; 17:11-19).

The salivas that are in the mouth of Christ are healing, light-giving salves, with which He gives light to the eyes of the man born blind (John 9:6).

The gaze of Christ is life giving. He gazed at the son of the widow as he was being carried out dead and it gave life to him (Luke 7:11-17).

The hand of Christ is an inviter of man to life. He came walking and calling his apostles to the kingdom of the heavens (cf. Luke 7:12-14).

The passing by of Christ is beneficial. As he was passing by he gave sight to two blind men along the way (cf. Matt 20:29-34).

The mercies of Christ are innumerable. For he had pity on five thousand men who were hungry. They needed five thousand barley loaves and he made them all eat and they were satisfied (cf. Matt 14:15-21; 16:9; Mark 6:35-44; 8:19; Luke 9:12-17; John 6:5-13).²⁹

Except for the first item in the list, which mentions the eyes of the Lord (ΜΠΧΟΕΙC), all of them contain the phrase ΜΠΕΧC, thus emphasizing the repetitive characteristic of an anaphora. The second anaphora contains a catalogue of the miracles or «mighty works» that Jesus performed:

ΕΙΝΑΧΕ ΟΥ· ΠΕΥΟΕΙΩ ΓΑΡ <N>ΝΑΚΑΑΤ ΕΙΩΑΧΕ ΕΤΒΕ
ΝΟΟΜ ΝΤΑΠΕΧC ΑΑΥ
ΖΜΠΚΟCΜΟC · ΜΝΝΕΩΠΗΡΕ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΕΤΕΜΝΡΜΝCΑΡΞ
ΝΑΩΧΙΗΠΕ ΜΜΟΟΥ· ΟΥΔΕ

²⁹ The arrangement of the text, the emphasis and the translations from this homily are my own and do not correspond to the version published by Bernardin (see note 20 above). The text has been checked against the manuscript.

Μ̄ΝΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΕΥC ΝCΠΟΥΔΕΟC ΝΑΨΧΙΗΠΕ ΜΜΟΟΥ· Ν̄CΖΑΪCΟΥ
 ΕΧΩΩΜΕ ·
 ΜΜΟΟΥ ΝΤΑῩΡΗΡΠ ·
 Μ̄ΝΠΕΤCΗC · ΝΤΑCΗ Μ̄ΠΕCΘΛΟC [109r1] ΑCΜΟΟΨΕ
 ΜΝΝΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΟΝ Ν̄ΤΑCΝΟΧΟΥ ΕΒΟΛ·
 Μ̄Ν̄ΝΜΠΟ Ν̄ΤΑCΤΡΕΥΨΑΧΕ·
 Μ̄Ν̄ΝΑΛ Ν̄ΤΑCΤΡΕΥCΩΤ̄Μ·
 Μ̄Ν̄ΝCΙΧ ΕΤΨΟΥΨΟΥ Ν̄ΤΑCΤΑΛCΟΟΥ·
 Μ̄Ν̄ΘΑΛΑCCA Ν̄ΤΑCΜΟΟΨΕ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΙΧ̄Ν̄ΝΕCΜΟΟΥ Ν̄ΘΕ
 ΝΟΥΠΕΤΡΑ Ν̄ΩΝΕ ·
 Μ̄Ν̄ΤΒΩ̄Ν̄Κ̄Ν̄ΤΕ ΕΤ̄Μ̄ΠΕCΘ̄Ν̄ΚΑΡΠΟC Ν̄ΤΑCΤΡΕCΨΟΟΥΕ ·
 Μ̄Ν̄Ν̄ΖΟΕΙΜ Ν̄ΘΑΛΑCCA Ν̄ΤΑῩΡ̄ΖΟΤΕ ΖΗΤ̄ Μ̄ΠΕCΨΑΧΕ
 ΑῩΘ̄Β̄ΙΟΟΥ ΕΠΕCΗΤ·
 Μ̄Ν̄ΤΨΕΕΡΕ Μ̄ΠΑΡΧΙCΥΝΑΓΨΟC Ν̄ΤΑCΒΟC̄ ΑCΑΖΕΡΑΤ̄C ΑC-
 ΩΝ̄Ζ̄ Ν̄ΤΕΡΕΤCΙΧ
 Μ̄ΠΕΝΤΑCΤΑΜΙΟC ΑΜΑΖΤΕ Μ̄ΜΟC:
 ΝΑΪ ΑΝΧΟΥ ΕΤΒΕ Ν̄CΟΜ Ν̄ΤΑΠΕΧΡΙCΤΟC ΑΔΥ ΕΑΝΟΥΟΝ-
 ΖΟΥ ΕΒΟΛ:

What shall I say? For the time would not permit me to speak *concerning the mighty works that*

Christ did in the world and all the wonders that no human being would be able to count.

Nor is there a zealous scribe would be able to number them and write them in a book (cf. John 21:25).

Water was made wine (John 2:2-11)

and *the lame man* who took up his bed [109r1] and walked (Matt 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26);

and *the demons* that he cast out; (cf. e.g., Mark 1:23-26; 5:1-13)

and *the dumb* that he caused to speak; (cf. e.g., Mark 7:32-35)

and *the deaf* that he caused to hear; (cf. e.g. Mark 7:32-35)

and *the withered hands* that he healed (Matt 12:10; Mark 3:5);

and *the sea* upon whose waters He walked as upon a stony rock (Matt 14:22-36; Mark 6:45-52; John 6:16-21);

and *the fig tree* on which he did not find fruit, which he caused to wither (Mark 11:13,20);

and *the waves* of the sea, which were thoroughly frightened at His speech and calmed down (Matt 8:23-27; Mark 4:25-41; Luke 8:22-25);

and *the daughter* of the ruler of the synagogue who leapt up, stood on her feet, and lived, when

the hand of her Creator took hold of her (Matt 9:18-26; Mark 5:22-43; Luke 8:41-56).

These things have we spoken and disclosed *concerning the mighty works that Christ did*.

This second anaphora is framed by an inclusion **ΕΤΒΕ Ν̄ΟΜ Ν̄ΤΑΠΕΧΡΙCΤΟC** **ΑΑΥ** «concerning the mighty works that Christ did» and most of the items in the list are introduced by **Μ̄Ν**. Together the two anaphoras set the stage for the account of the great miracle of the raising of Lazarus. The first one, however, with the description of the parts of Christ's body, provides a contrast for the description of the parts of Lazarus' body that will follow later.

After a transitional passage that locates the homily in the context of the liturgy mentioning the «The word that was read to us today in the Gospel according to John», the author poses the rhetorical question «What, indeed, is the word which was read to us?» and proceeds to quote John 11:1-3. He then asks the hearer/reader to note in particular the phrase «She who *anointed* the Lord with ointment» (John 11:2). There follows a set of antitheses in the form of an apostrophe addressed to this Mary, of which the first is:

Ω ΤΕ̄ΙΝΟC Ν̄ΩΠΗΡΕ ΕΤΩ·
 Ν̄ΤΟ ΜΕΝ ΑΡΤΑΖCΤ̄ ΝΟΥCΟC̄Ν· ΑΝΟΚ ΖΩ †ΝΑΤΑΖCΕ Μ̄ΠΝΕΖ
 Ν̄ΤΕCΦΡΑΓΙC Ν̄ΑΤΒΩΛ
 ΕΒΟΛ ΖΜ̄ΠΑΡΑΝ Μ̄ΠΡΑΝ Μ̄ΠΑΕΙΩΤ Μ̄ΠΕΠΝΕΥΜΑ Ν̄ΖΑΓΙΟΝ·

O this great wonder which is read!

You, indeed, have anointed me with an ointment; I for my part shall anoint you with the oil of

the unbreakable seal, in my name and the name of My Father and the Holy Spirit.

Each of the three antitheses is carefully balanced with the same verb repeated in the first person preceded by the phrase **ΑΝΟΚ ΖΩ**. In the first and third antitheses, the same verb is repeated. Then John 11:3 is quoted again followed by a brief exclamatory piece on the love Jesus had for the three: Martha, Mary and Lazarus.

The structure of the rest of the homily follows the same pattern of quotations and comments. Most of the comments are in the form of anaphoras or sets of antitheses built upon a phrase of the verses quoted. A number of these are in the form of an apostrophe.³⁰ An example will suffice to illustrate the technique.

30 See A.W. HALSALL, «Apostrophe», in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* 1, ed. G. Ueding, Darmstadt 1992, 830-36.

After quoting John 11:14-16, which concludes with Didymus saying, «Let us go ourselves that we may die with him», the author introduces the following apostrophe addressed to Didymus/Thomas:

ω ΘΩΜΑΣ ΝΑΩ ΝΖΕ ΕΚΡΖΟΤΕ ΜΠΜΟΥ ΕΡΕΠΩΝΖ ΜΟΟΩΕ
ΝΜΜΑΚ· ΚΝΑΣΟΥΩΝΨ ΤΕΝΟΥ ΧΕ ΝΤΟΨ ΠΕΤΟΥΝΑΜΟΟΥΤΨ ΧΙΝ
ΜΜΟΝ ΝΤΟΨ ΠΕΤΖΑΡΠΑΖΕ ΝΚΕΟΥΑ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΝ ΤΟΙΧ ΜΠΜΟΥ :

ΟΥΑΖΚ ΝCΩΪ Ω ΘΩΜΑΣ ΤΑΤCΑΒΟΚ ΕΠΤΥΠΟC ΝΤΑΝΑCΤΑCΙC
ΕΨΝΑΑΑΨ

ΜΠCΩΝΤ ΤΗΡΨ·

ΑΜΟΥ ΝΜΜΑΪ ΤΑΤCΑΒΟΚ ΕΠCΩΜΑ ΝΛΑΖΑΡΟC ΝΤΑΨΚΝΟC
ΑΨΨΕΨ CΨΒΩΩΝ ΕΒΟΛ

ΜΝΘΩ ΕΨΝΑΜΟΥΤΕ ΕΤΕΨΨΥΧΗ ΤΑΤΡΕCΒΩΚ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕΠΕΨ-
CΩΜΑ ΝΚΕCΟΤ·

ΟΥΑΖΚ ΝCΩΪ Ω ΔΙΔΥΜΟC ΤΑΤΡΕΚΘΕΩΡΙ ΝΝΟΙΧ ΝΛΑΖΑΡΟC
ΜΝΝΕΨΟΥΕΡΗΤΕ

ΝΤΑΨΜΟΡΟΥ ΜΝΝΖΑΘΕ ΜΝΜΜΡΡΕ³¹ ΜΠΜΟΥ: ΕΪΝΑΨ ΠΩΝΖ ΝΑΨ
ΝΚΕCΟΝ ΝCΕΖΥΠΕΡΕΤΕΙ ΜΜΟΪ·

ΜΟΟΩΕ ΝΜΜΑΪ Ω ΔΙΔΥΜΟC ΤΑΤCΑΒΟΚ ΕΝΒΑΛ ΝΛΑΖΑΡΟC
ΕΑΨΨΤΑΜ ΕΜΝΟΥΟΕΙΝ ΝΖΗΤΟΥ· ΕΪΝΑΟΥΩΝ ΜΜΟΟΥ ΝΚΕCΟΤ
ΝΤΑΨ ΠΟΥΟΕΙΝ ΕΡΟΥ·

ΑΜΟΥ ΕΠΤΑΨΟC ΝΜΜΑΪ Ω ΘΩΜΑΣ ΤΑΤCΑΒΟΚ ΕΤΤΑΠΡΟ
ΕΨΨΤΑΜ ΑΨΩ ΠΕΨΛΑC ΕΨΛΕΨΛΩΨ ΕΜΝΝΙΒΕ ΖΝΝΕΨΘΒΨΑ·
ΕΪΝΑΟΥΩΝ ΝΤΕΨΤΑΠΡΟ ΝΤΑΤΡΕΠΕΨΛΑC ΨΑΧΕ ΑΨΩ ΝΤΑΨ
ΠΝΕΨΜΑ ΕΡΟΥ·

ΑΜΗΪΤΝ ΝΜΜΑΪ ΤΗΡΤΝ³² Ω ΝΑΜΑΘΗΤΗC ΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ ΝΤΕΤΝCΩΤΜ
ΕΡΟΪ ΕΪΝΑΜΟΥΤΕ

ΖΝΤΕCΜΗ ΝΤΑΜΝΤΝΟΥΤΕ ΝΤΕΛΑΖΑΡΟC CΩΤΜ ΕΡΟΪ
ΝΨΜΟΟΩΕ ΝΨΕΙ ΨΑΡΟΪ ΕΨΟΝΖ: ΑΨΩ ΝΤΕΡΕΨΧΕ ΝΑΪ ΑΨΜΟΟΩΕ
ΜΝΝΕΨΜΑΘΗΤΗC ΕΤΡΕΨΒΩΚ ΨΑΡΟΥ:

O *Thomas*, how is it that you fear death, when life is walking with you? You will know Him now because the one whom they will put to death among us, is the one who seizes another from the hand of death.

Follow me, *Thomas*, and I will show you the model of my Resurrection, which I shall perform for every creature.

31 Ms reads: ΜΝΝΜΜΡΡΕ.

32 Ms reads: ΤΗΡΤΡ.

Come with me, that I may show you the body of Lazarus, which has decayed and spread abroad a foul smell; and the way in which I shall call to his soul so as to make it enter his body again.

Follow me, *Didymus*, so that I may cause you to see the hands of Lazarus and his feet, which were bound with cords and the bindings of death; to them I shall give life again that they may minister to me.

Walk with me, *Didymus*, that I may show you the eyes of Lazarus, which have closed, there being no light in them; these I shall open again and give light to them.

Come to the tomb with me, *Thomas*, so that I may show you the mouth closed and his tongue decayed, there being no breath in his nostrils; his mouth I shall open and I shall make his tongue speak and I shall give breath to him.

Come with me, all of you, my holy disciples, and listen to me as I shall call in the voice of my divinity and Lazarus will hear me and will walk and come to me alive. And when he had said these things, He walked with his disciples to go to him.

The description of the dead body of Lazarus with emphasis on the different parts of the body that have decayed – eyes, mouth, tongue, etc. – corresponds to the description later on of the body of Lazarus brought back to life. In fact the mention of the body parts, whether of Christ or of Lazarus, and their corresponding good odor or bad odor forms a *leitmotiv* that helps to tie the whole together. For example, when Christ arrives at the tomb, after describing the condition of Lazarus in the tomb, the following anaphora is inserted:

ΑΦΕΙ ΔΕ ΕΤΜΗΤΕ ΝΟΙ ΙΗCOYC
 ΤΑΠΩΘΗΚΗ ΕΤΜΕΖ ΝΩΝΖ·
 ΤΤΑΠΡΟ ΕΤΜΕΖ ΝC†ΝΟΥΒΕ·
 ΠΛΑC ΕΤ†ΖΟΤΕ ΜΠΜΟΥ·
 ΠΔΥΝΑΤΟC ΖΝΝΕCΟΥΕΖCΑΖΝΕ·
 ΠΡΑΩΕ ΝΝΕΤΡΖΗΒΕ·
 ΠΤΩΟΥΝ ΝΝΕΝΤΑΥΖΕ·
 ΤΑΝΑCΤΑCΙC ΝΝΕΤΜΟΟΥΤ·
 ΠCΩΟΥΖ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΝΝΕΤΧΟΟΡΕ ΕΒΟΛ·
 ΘΕΛΠΙC ΝΝΕΤΕΜΝΤΟΥΖΕΛΠΙC7

But into the midst came Jesus,
 the storehouse full of life,
 the mouth that is full of sweet odour,
 the tongue that frightens death,
 the Mighty One in His commands,

the Joy of those who are sorrowful,
 the Rising of those who have fallen,
 the Resurrection of the dead,
 the Assembly of the those dispersed,
 the Hope of the hopeless.

Although the homily in general seems to follow the text of John 11, there are a number of chiasmic elements built into the structure as a whole. The center of the homily is devoted to the scene of Lazarus' resurrection. After a number of apostrophes addressed to Lazarus and to Christ, the author concludes the description of his return to life with an anaphora describing each part of his body:

ḢΒΑΛ ḢΤΑΥΩΤΑΜ ΕΤΜΟΥΩΝ ΩΑΕΝΕΖ ΑΥΟΥΩΝ ḢΚΕCOTI
 ΑΥΜΟΥΖ ΝΟΥΟΕΙΝ ΑΥΝΑΥ

ΕΡΩΜΕ ΝΙΜ·

ḢΤΑΠΕ ḢΤΑΥΜΟΡC ḢΠCΟΥΔΑΡΙΟΝ ΔCΒΩΛ ΕΒΟΛ ΔCΤΑΧΡΟ
ḢΚΕCOTI ΔCΠΡΟCΚΥΝΕΙ

ḢΠΕΧΡΙCΤΟC·

ḢΜΑΔΔΕ ḢΤΑΥΤΩΜ³³ ΖΙΤḢΤΕCΩΕ ḢΠΜΟΥ ΑΥΟΥΩΝ ḢΚΕCOTI
 ΑΥCΩΤḢ ΕΠΕΧΡΙCΤΟC ΕCΜΟΥΤΕ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕΠΤΑΦΟC ΖḢΤΕCΜΗ
 ḢΝΟΥΤΕ·

ΠΩΑΝΤC ḢΤΑΥΩḢΜΜΟ ΕΠΝΙΒΕ ḢΩΝΖ ΑCΕΝΕΡΓΙ ḢΚΕCOTI ΑC-
 ΩΩΛḢ ΕΠΕCḢΝΟΥΒΕ

ḢΠΕΧΡΙCΤΟC·

ΠΛΑC ḢΤΑCΚΑΤΟΟΤC ΕΒΟΛ ΕΤḢΩΔΔΕ ḢΟΥΩΖḢ ΑCΚΙΜ
ḢΚΕCOTI ΑCCOΟΥΤḢ ΑCCMΟΥ ΕΠΝΟΥΤΕ·

ΝΕCΠΟΤΟΥ ḢΤΑΥΩΤΑΜ ḢΜΟΟΥ ΔΕ ḢΝΕΥΩΔΔΕ ḢΚΕCOTI
 ΑΥΟΥΩΝ ḢΚΕCOTI ΑΥΩΔΔΕ ḢḢΠΩΗΡΕ ḢΠΝΟΥΤΕ·

ΠΖΗΤ ḢΤΑCΒΩΛ ΕΒΟΛ ΕΤḢΩΔΔΕ ΕΤḢΜΕΕΥΕ³⁴ ΕΩḢḢΝΑΥ
 ΕΡΩΜΕ ΕCΟΥΩΝC ΟΥΔΕ

ḢΝΕCΕΩΔΙCΘΑΝΕ ΕΤΒΕ ΛΑΔΥ ΑCΤΑΧΡΟ ḢΚΕCOTI ΑCCOΥḢ
 ΠΕΝΤΑCΤΑΜΙΟC·

ḢΜΕΛΟC ΤΗΡΟΥ ḢΤΑΥΛΟCΛΕC ΑΥΒΩΛ ΕΒΟΛ ΖḢΖΗΤC ḢΠΚΑΖ
 ΑΥΩΝΖ ḢΚΕCOTI ΑΥΖΥΠΕΡΗΤΕΙ ḢΠCΩΜΑ·

ΝΕΟΥΕΡΗΤΕ ḢΤΑΥCΟΝΖΟΥ ΕΤḢΤΡΕΥΜΟΟΩΕ ΕΝΕΖ ΑΥΒΩΛ
 ΕΒΟΛ ḢΚΕCOTI ΑΥΩ ΑΥCΟΟΥΤḢ ΑΥΔΙΑΚΟΝΕΙ ΕΠΕΧΡΙCΤΟC ΙΗ-
 CΟΥC ΠΩΗΡΕ ḢΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΖḢΟΥΖΥΠΟΜΟΝΗ:

33 Ms reads: ḢΤΑΥΤΩΟΥΝ.

34 Ms reads: ΕΙΕΕΜΗΕΥΕ

The eyes, which had closed so as never to open, opened *again* filled with light and saw everyone.

The head, which had been bound with a napkin, loosed itself and became strong *again* and bowed to Christ.

The ears, which had been closed by the stroke of death, opened *again* and heard Christ calling in the tomb in His divine voice.

His nose, which had been a stranger to the breath of life, functioned *again* and smelt the sweet odour of Christ.

The tongue, which had ceased speaking any more, moved *again*, stretched, and praised God.

The lips, which had closed so as not to speak *again*, opened *again* and spoke with the Son of God.

The mind, which had dissolved so as not to speak or to think or to be able to see a man to know him or to be able to perceive anything, became strong *again* and knew the one who had created it.

All the members, which had decayed and dissolved in the earth, became alive *again* and ministered to the body.

The feet, which had been bound so as never to walk, were loosed *again* and stretched and ministered patiently to Christ Jesus, the Son of God.

Other rhetorical features of this homily that deserve mention include a carefully crafted polemical section (a *psogos*)³⁵ against the Pharisees or high priests (who appear to be confused with one another) taking John 11:46-50 as its point of departure and a number of exclamatory «O» anaphoras. The concluding peroration of the homily contains a list of miracles that corresponds to the list in the exordium. It is doubtful that this homily could have been delivered extemporaneously even by an experienced preacher. The rhetorical construction is far too complicated and suggests very careful composition. It is filled with biblical citations and allusions, as may be observed from some of the passages quoted.

Another homily attributed to Athanasius «on the sufferings of Christ Jesus and on the fear of the judgment place» contains similar rhetorical features.³⁶ The homily itself is shorter and somewhat less ornate, but begins with an elaborate exordium in two parts in the form of an invitation to the «marriage feast». After an initial exhortation not to be like the foolish virgins and

35 On this rhetorical figure, see LAUSBERG, *Handbuch*, §61 and §1129.

36 J.B. Bernardin, «A Coptic Sermon attributed to St. Athanasius», *Journal of Theological Studies* 38 (1937) 113-129. Depuydt, *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts*, no. 170, 7 (p. 348). The manuscript is: M595, ff. 100v – 108r. CPG 2184: *In passionem*.

to «prepare yourselves inwardly and outwardly to go into the marriage feast», a lengthy anaphora of ten antitheses is introduced, of which we quote only the first three:

NPMMAO MMATE AN NETNKALLEI MMOOY · ALLA TNKALLEI
ON NN̄ZHKĒ

̄N̄ZOΟΥΤ ΜΜΑΤΕ ΑΝ ΝΕΤ̄ΝΚΑΛΕΙ ΜΜΟΟΥ ΑΛΛΑ Τ̄ΝΚΑΛΕΙ ΟΝ
N̄NKĒZIOME ·

NZEN̄OINOYOM AN EYXAZM NETOYNAKAAΥ ZAPOTN · ALLA
Z̄NTPOΦH M̄ΠNIKON NETOYNAKAAΥ ZAPOT̄N ETPETĒT̄N̄XI
EBOLA N̄ZHTOY

Not only the rich do we invite, but we also invite the poor.

Not only men do we invite, but we also invite women.

No defiled food will be offered you, but spiritual food will be offered you to partake of.

The second section of the exordium consists of a series of exhortations also based on the theme of the marriage feast - not to come with dirty clothing, not to lust after the wives of others, not to slander the other guests, etc. The exordium ends with an exhortation to beseech God to send his Spirit «to supply us with speech and to open the heart of each one of us that we may keep the commandments of God and of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord».

The rest of the homily is divided into three sections, loosely text based and each with the theme of one of the three times that «the Father grieved». The first section is based on a series of quotations from Genesis beginning with the creation of man (Gen 1:26), mentioning the creation of woman, the killing of Abel, the flood and concluding with the Father grieving over Adam when his body was buried. The second, longer section is dedicated to the grief of the Father when his Son was crucified by the Jews on the cross. It is based on the account in John's Gospel and contains polemic against the «lawless Jews». This second section concludes with a lengthy anaphora on the grief of the Father, which begins as follows:

ΑΝΔΥ ΘΕ ΕΠΕΙΩΤ ΕΘΕΩΡΕΙ Μ̄ΠΕCΩΗΡΕ ΕΥ†ΕΙΒ̄Τ ΝΑC
ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕΠΩΕ Μ̄ΠΕCΤΑΥΡΟC

ΑΝΔΥ ΕΠΕ̄ΜΚΑZ N̄ZHT [f.104v2] Μ̄ΠΕΙΩΤ ΕΡΕΝΕCΩΗΡΕ ΛΙΤΕΙ
N̄OYKOȲI M̄MOOY Z̄ΠΕCΤΑΥΡΟC ΕΥ† ΝΑC N̄OYZ̄M̄X̄ M̄N̄OYCIΩΕ ·

ΑΝΔΥ ΕΠΕΙΩΤ ΕΡΕ̄ΜΜΑΤΟῙ ΠΩΩ N̄N̄ZŌIΤΕ Μ̄ΠΕCΩΗΡΕ ΕΧ-
ΩΟΥ ΕΥΝΕΧ ΚΛΗΡΟC ΕΧ̄N̄ΤΕCZ̄BCΩ ·

Behold, indeed, the Father as He looked upon his Son as they nailed him to the wood of the cross.

Behold the deep sorrow of the Father as his Son asked for a little water on the cross and they gave him vinegar and gall.

Behold the Father as the soldiers divided the garments of his Son among them and cast lots for his clothing.

After a brief transitional passage summarizing the sorrows of the Father, the homily passes to the third section, on the final judgment. This contains an intricate section in which the heathen are questioned about their worship of the sun, the moon, the stars, the idols, and sticks and stones. Each of these objects of worship then comes before the judgment seat to testify against the heathen. The homily concludes with a final peroration on the great division to take place on the last day and the grief of the Son and the Father and the angels over the destruction of sinners.

Although these two homilies belong to two different forms of the text based homily, they contain a sufficient number of rhetorical elements in common including the elaborate exordium, the frequent use of anaphora, and the polemic against the Jews, that a common authorship could be imagined. The comparison of the Lord weeping over Lazarus with the grief of the Father over Adam at the end of the first section of the second homily suggests another contact between the two pieces: «For as our Saviour in His goodness wept over Lazarus in Bethany (John 11:35), so on the other hand again did the Father grieve over Adam when his body was buried under the earth».

TWO SERMONS ATTRIBUTED TO EVODIUS OF ROME

It may be instructive to compare the rhetorical elements in these two pseudepigraphical works with two other pseudepigraphical compositions attributed to Evodius of Rome, a sermon (ΛΟΓΟΣ) on the death of the Virgin Mary and a sermon (ΛΟΓΟΣ) on the Passion and Resurrection.³⁷ Evodius of Rome, un-

³⁷ The latter has been published with translation by P. Chapman in *Homiletica from the Pierpont Morgan Library. Seven Coptic Homilies Attributed to Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, and Evodius of Rome*, ed. L. Depuydt et al. (CSCO 524-525), Louvain 1991, 524:79-106 and 525:83-114. The former has been published by S. J. SHOEMAKER, «The Sahidic Coptic Homily on the Dormition of the Virgin Attributed to Evodius of Rome: An Edition from Morgan MSS 596 & 598 with Translation», *Analecta Bollandiana* 14 (1999) 241-283. The translations of the «Homily on the Dormition» quoted in this article, however, are my own.

like the well-known historical figure of Athanasius, is a nonexistent or fictive person created by the author or authors of these homilies. However, the intent was probably pseudepigraphical, that is, to attribute the contents of the writings to an authoritative figure, in this case a person who supposedly belonged to the group of the «seventy disciples» mentioned in Luke's Gospel.³⁸ The first of these sermons begins with a statement of the theme, praise of the Virgin Mary:

ΟΥΠΡΕΠΩΝ ΠΕ ΑΥΩ ΟΥΔΙΚΑΙΟΝ ΠΕ · ΝΙΜ · ΖΙ CMOY ΝΙΜ ΝΤ-
ΝΧΟΕΙC ΤΗΡΝ ΤΕΘΕΩΔΟΚΟC ΕΤ ΕΤΡΕΝ†ΤΑΙΟ ΟΥΑΑΒ ΜΑΡΙΑ ·
ΤΝΠΡΕCΒΕΥΤΗCΤΕ ΤΠΡΕCΒΕΥΕ ΖΑΡΟΝ ΝΟΥΟΕΙΩ ΝΙΜ ΝΝΑΖΡΜ
ΠΝΟΥΤΕ · ΤΡΡΩ ΜΠΓΕΝΟC ΤΗΡϣ ΝΝΕΖΙΟΜΕ · ΑΥΩ ΤΜΑΑΥ
ΜΠΡΡΟ ΝΝΡΩΟΥ· ΠΝΧΟΕΙC ΙC ΠΕΧC :~

It is fitting and right for us to give all praise and all blessing to our Lady of us all, the holy Theotokos Mary. She is our intercessor, interceding for us at all times in the presence of God, the Queen of the whole race of women and the Mother of the king of kings, our Lord Jesus the Christ.

There follows an intricate exordium comparing the wedding feast prepared by an earthly king for his son with that prepared in the heavens for this feast. After a lengthy description of the earthly marriage feast, the author turns to a description of the heavenly one with the transitional comment:

ΑΥΩ ΝΑΙ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΩΑΥΩΩΠΕ ΕΤΒΕ ΟΥΩΕΛΕΕΤ ΝΤΕ ΠΕΙ-
ΚΟCΜΟC :~

ΚΑΙ ΓΑΡ ΩΑΡΕΠΕΥΡΑΩΕ ΚΟΤϣ ΕΥΖΗΒΕ · ΜΝΝCΑ ΟΥΚΟΥΙ
ΖΙΤΜ ΠΜΟΥ:~

ΕΙΕ ΟΥΑΩ ΝΟΟΤ ΠΕ ΠΡΑΩΕ ΕΤΠΟΡΩ ΝΑΝ ΕΒΟΛ ΜΠΟΟΥ ΖΝ
ΤΜΗΤΕ ΝΝΤΑΓΜΑ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΝΜΠΗΥΕ :·

ΝΑΓΓΕΛΟC ΜΝ ΝΑΡΧΑΓΓΕΛΟC · ΝΕΧΕΡΟΥΒΙΝ ·· ΜΝ ΝΕΖΕΡ-
ΑΦΙΝ ·· ΝΕΘΡΟΝΟC ·· ΜΝ [N]ΜΜΝΤΩC· ΝΑΡΧΗ · ΜΝ ΝΕΕΞΟΥ-
CΙΑ · ΕΥΡΑΩΕ ΕΥCΤΟΛΙΖΕ · ΕΥΧΩΡΕΥΕ ΖΝ ΤΩΕΛΕΕΤ
ΜΠΩΗΡΕ ΜΠΡΡΟ ··

And all these things happen on account of a bride of this world.

For indeed their rejoicing will turn to mourning after a little while because of death.

38 That is already evident in the unusually long inscriptions at the beginning of the two homilies, which include fictive elements (the dedication of a church to the Theotokos, Evodius as successor of Peter at Rome).

Then what sort of rejoicing is spread out for us today in the midst of the whole hierarchy of the heavens?

The angels, the archangels, the cherubim, the seraphim, the thrones, the dominations, the principalities and the powers (Col 1:16), are rejoicing, are dressing up, and are setting forth³⁹ for the marriage of the king's son.

The exordium continues then with praise of the Virgin and an invitation to the kings (David and Solomon) and prophets (Isaiah, Ezekiel) to come to the feast. These are addressed explicitly because in each case a text attributed to them is invoked to describe a quality of the Virgin. The exordium concludes with the universal statement: «Blessed are you, O Mary, among the whole creation of women that God has created», which forms an inclusion with the opening of the sermon. This exclamation is also the beginning of an apostrophe addressed to the Virgin in which Evodius stresses his personal knowledge of the adult Jesus, but also the wish that he could have seen him as a child with Mary: «I saw them with my eyes, I Evodius, the least,⁴⁰ who is speaking now in this sermon (ΕΞΗΓΗCIC), I and my fathers, the apostles, and the seventy-two disciples» (cf. Luke 10:1). There follow a series of three anaphoras. The first expresses these wishes:

ΑΛΛΑ ΖΗΝΑΙ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΝΕΙΟΥΩ ΠΕ · ΕΛΙΡΕΜΠΩΑ ΝΝΑΥ
ΕΡΟϢ· ΜΠΝΑΥ ΕΥΤΑΛΛΗΥ ΕΧΝ ΝΟΥΠΑΤ ΕΥΘΩΥΤ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΖΜ
ΠΟΥΖΟ· ΕΥΘΩΥΕ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕΖΡΑ ΖΜ ΠΩΒΕ · ΝΤΕΥΜΝΤΝΟΥΤΕ ··
ΕΙΟΥΩΩ ΕΝΑΥ ΕΡΟ Ω ΤΕΖΙΑΙΒΕ ΝΑΤΤΩΛΜ ·· ΕΡΑΜΑΖΤΕ
ΝΤΟΙΧ ΝΜΜΑΝΟΥΗΛ ΠΟΥΩΗΡΕ ΕΡΩΑΧΕ ΝΜΜΑΥ ΕΡΧΩ Μ [f.
21r, col.2] ΜΟC ΧΕ ΜΟΩΥΕ ΜΟΩΥΕ ΠΑΩΗΡΕ ΝΘΕ ΝΝΩΗΡΕ ΩΗΜ
ΤΗΡΟΥ ΕΤΟΥΤCΑΒΟ ΜΜΟΟΥ ΕΜΜΟΩΥΕ · ΝΤΟϢ ΖΩΩϢ ΙC ΠΑ-
ΧΟΕΙC ΝΝΕΥΕΙΟΥΩΖ ΟΥΩΖ · ΖΝ ΝΕΥΚΟΥΙ ΝΒΟΠ ΕΥΜΟΩΥΕ
ΕΥΧΙΤΑΘCΕ · ΝΘΕ ΝΝΩΗΡΕ ΚΟΥΙ ΤΗΡΟΥ
ΕΙΟΥΩΩ ΕΝΑΥ ΕΡΟ Ω ΠΑΖΟ ΕΤΝΕCΩϢ ΜΠΝΑΥ ΕΥΘΩΥΤ
ΕΖΡΑΙ ΖΑ ΠΟΥΖΟ ΖΩC ΕΥΧΩ ΜΜΟC ΝΕ ΧΕ ΤΑΛΟΙ ΕΧΩ · Ω
ΤΑΜΑΑΥ ΧΕ ΑΙΖΙCΕ ΕΙΜΟΩΥΕ ∴
ΕΙΟΥΩΩ ΕΝΑΥ ΕΡΟ Ω ΤΕΒΡΟΟΜΠΕ ΕΤΝΕCΟC ΕΥCΟΟΥΤΝ
ΝΤΕΥΘΙΧ ΕΒΟΛ ΕΥΑΜΑΖΤΕ ΝΤΟΥΕΚΕΙΒΕ ΝΑΤΤΩΛΜ· ΕΥ† ΜΜΟC
ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕΥΕΥΤΑΠΡΟ ΝΝΟΥΤΕ ∴-

39 The Coptic form (ΕΥΧΩΡΕΥΕ) could be interpreted as «set forth» (χωρέω) or «dance» (χορεύω).

40 An allusion to 1 Cor 15:9; Eph 3:8. The term used by Paul of himself is being applied to Evodius.

But in all these things *I was wishing* that I had been worthy to see him raised on your knees, looking into your face, laughing in your face with the laughter of his divinity.

It is you that I wish to see, O spotless lamb, grasping the hand of Emanuel, your son, talking with him, saying [f. 21r,col2], «walk, walk, my son», like all little boys are taught to walk. He also, Jesus my Lord, will not walk steadily with his little feet, walking, following like all little boys.⁴¹

It is you that I wish to see, O beautiful treasure, when he looks up into your face as he says to you, «pick me up to you, O my mother, because I have become tired of walking».

It is you that I wish to see, O beautiful dove, as he stretches forth his hand and takes hold of your spotless breast, putting it into his divine mouth.

The second anaphora is a set of comparisons in which the Virgin is exalted above the sun, the moon, the angels, etc. The third is a long set of titles with a scriptural reference of which I quote only a few:

Ω ΤΕΚΛΟΟΛΕ ΕΤΑCΩΟΥ ΕΤΕΡΕΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΤΑΛΗΥ ΕΧΩC ·
 Ω ΠΟΕΛΜΑΕΙΝ ΝΝΟΥΒ ΕΤΕΡΕΠΜΑΝΝΑ ΖΗΠ ΝΖΗΤḲ ·
 Ω ΤΕΖΕΔΡΙΑ ΝΒΡΡΕ · ΝΤΑΠΕΖΜΟΥ ΕΤΕΝΖΗΤC ΧΩΚΡ ΝΝΕΜ-
 ΨΥΧΗ ΝΤΑΥΒΑΒΕ ΖΙΤΜ ΠΝΟΒΕ ·
 Ω ΤΚΙΒΩΤΟC ΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ ΕΤΕΡΕΝΕΠΛΑΞ ΝΤΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ ΖΙΖΟΥΝ
 ΜΜΟC:-

O swift cloud (Isa 19:1) upon which God is raised.

O golden vase in which the manna is hidden (Heb 9:4).

O new water jug, in which the salt within it seasons our souls that have become insipid (cf. Matt 5:13) through sin.

O holy ark in which are the tables of the covenant (Heb 9:4).

At the end of this litany of titles there begins a lengthy apostrophe addressed to or denouncing the «impious Jew»:

41 Shoemaker («Sahidic Coptic Homily», 261) translates the phrase: «He ... would not take step on step with his little feet...». Apart from the question of understanding the verb (ΝΝΕC4CΕΙΟΥΩ2) as 3rd Future vs. Imperfect (for which there is no obvious justification), which he discusses in note 5 (pp. 280-281), there is the question of what the phrase really means. Here the context must be taken into account. There is a theological point involved, namely the question of the full humanity of Jesus. If the phrase were translated to mean that Jesus did not have difficulty learning to walk like all little children, then it would be contrary to the idea expressed in §38 (using the phrase from Luke 2:52) that He did grow like all men. The sections 40-42 are spelling out this idea. Therefore I have suggested the translation: «He ... will not walk steadily with his little feet...».

ΕΚΤΩΝ ΤΕΝΟΥ Ω ΠΕΙΟΥΔΑΪ ΝΑΓΝΩΜΩΝ ΠΡΕ42ΩΤΒ ΜΠΕ4-
ΧΟΕΙC ·· ΠΕΙΡΕ4ΡΠΠΕΘΟΥ ΝΝΕΤΕΡΠΕΤΝΑΝΟΥ4 ΝΑ4 ··

ΜΑΡΕ4ΕΙ ΕΠΕΙΜΑ ΜΠΟΥ ΝῶΞΙΩΠΕ ΝΑ4 [f.21v, col. 2] Ε4-
CΩΤΜ ΕΝΕΙΜΝΤΜΝΤΡΕ ΤΗΡΟΥ :- ΝΤΑΝΗ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΜ ΠΕ4ΓΕΝΟC
ΩΡΠΠΡΟΦΗΤΕΥΕ ΜΜΟΥ ΖΑ ΤΕΙΠΑΡΘΕΝΟC · ΜΝ ΠΕCΧΠΟ
ΕΤCΜΑΜΑΑΤ ···-

Where are you now, O impious Jew, slayer of his Lord (cf. Act 2:23, 36; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:39), this doer of evil to those who do good to him (cf. Luke 6:9, 11)?

Let him come to this place today and be ashamed listening to all the testimonies that those from his nation prophesied ahead of time concerning this virgin and her blessed giving-birth.

This section, a diatribe in the modern but not ancient sense of the word, occupies the entire middle part of the sermon and is organized in the form of scriptural testimonies that the Jews have supposedly ignored or texts that bear witness against and condemn them. Much of it is directed to the Jews in the form of questions as if it was in a courtroom. At the end of this lengthy indictment, which contains its own rhetorical subdivisions, the «preacher» turns to the theme of the death of the Virgin, which occupies the last third of the sermon.

ΠΑΗΝ ΜΑΡΕΝΚΩΝCΩΝ ΝΝΑΙ ΝΤΕΙΜΙΝΕ ·· ΝΤΕΝΚΤΟΝ Ε2-
ΡΑΪ ΕΧΜ ΠΜΕΓΕΘΟC [f. 23v.] ΝΤΕΙΠΑΡΘΕΝΟC ΝΡΕ4ΧΠΕΠΝΟΥΤΕ
ΝΤΝΤΑΜΟΤΝ ΕΠΕΖΟΥ ΜΠΕCΧΩΚ ΕΒΟΛ ΕΤΤΑΕΙΗΥ :- ΧΕΚΑC
ΕΡΕΜΠΙCΤΟC ΝΑCΩΤΜ ΝCΕ†ΕΟΥ ΜΠΝΟΥΤΕ :-

ΑΥΩ ΝΕ†ΝΑΧΟΥ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΝΚΕΟΥΑ ΑΝ ΠΝΤΑ4ΝΑΥ ΕΡΟΥ
Α4ΧΟΥ ΕΡΟΪ · ΑΛΛΑ ΑΝΟΚ ΠΝΤΑΪΝΑΥ ΕΡΟΥ ΖΝ ΝΑΒΑΛ ·
ΑΥΩ ΑΪΟΜΩΜΟΥ ΖΝ ΝΑΒΙΧ · ΧΕ ΩΑΥΤΑΝΖΕΤΠΝΑΥ ΝΖΝΒΑΛ
ΕΖΟΥΕ ΕΠCΩΤΜ ΝΖΝΜΑΑΧΕ:-

But let us leave behind things of this sort and return to the greatness of this Virgin, God-bearer, and tell you about the day of her noble end, in order that the believers may hear and give glory to God.

And all the things that I will recount are not from another who saw them and told them to me, but it is I who saw them with my own eyes and I touched them with my own hands, because the sight of eyes is more trusted than the hearing of ears.

In fact what follows is a retelling of what is by this time traditional material regarding the death of the Virgin.⁴² This includes another appearance of Jesus to his apostles and disciples just before they are to disperse to preach the gospel to the whole world and at this time he announces the death of his mother to take place the following day. However, even in the retelling, the author adds rhetorical flourishes of his own as in the following set of contrasts inserted just before Jesus invites his mother to prepare herself for death:

ω ταμααυ [f. 24r, col. 2] καν εωχε αρερπις νεβοτ ερτ-
ωουν ζαρο ζν τογκαλαζη ετογααβ ..

ΑΝΟΚ ΖΩ ΤΝΑΤΩΟΥΝ ΖΑΡΟΪ ΖΝ ΝΕCΠΛΑΧΝΟΝ ΝΤΑΜΝΤΩΝΖΤΗC
ΑΥΩ ΕΩΧΕ ΑΡΖΛΟΟΛΕ ΜΜΟΪ ΖΙΧΝ <Ν>ΟΥΠΑΤ ΜΝ <Ν>ΟΥCΒΟΪ ...

ΑΝΟΚ ΖΩ ΤΝΑΤΑΛΟ ΖΙΧΝ ΟΥΘΡΟΝΟC ΕCΖΑΕΟΟΥ ΕCΖΙΟΥΝΑΜ
ΜΜΟΪ ΜΝ ΠΑΕΙΩΤ ΝΝΑΓΑΘΟC .

ΕΩΧΕ ΑΡCΟΥΛΟΛΤ ΝΖΝΤΟΕΙC ΜΠΕΖΟΥ ΝΤΑΡΧΠΟΪ ΝΖΗΤ
· ΑΡΚΩ ΜΜΟΪ ΖΝ<ΟΥ>ΟΥΟΜC ΑΥΕΖΕ · ΜΝ ΟΥΕΙΩ ΡΖΑΙΒΕ ΕΡΟΪ

ΑΝΟΚ ΖΩ ΤΝΑCΚΕΠΑΖΕ ΜΜΟ ΖΙΧΕΝ ΝΕΤΝΖ ΝΝΕΖΕΡΑΦΙΝ :-
ΑΥΩ ΕΩΧΕ ΑΡΑCΠΑΖΕ ΜΜΟΪ ΖΝ ΤΟΥΤΑΠΡΟ Α<Ρ>CΑΝΟΥΩΤ
ΖΝ ΤΟΥΕΡΩΤΕ ΜΠΑΡΘΕΝΙΚΩΝ ..

ΑΝΟΚ ΖΩ ΤΝΑΑCΠΑΖΕ ΜΜΟ ΜΠΜΤΟ ΕΒΟΛ ΜΠΑΕΙΩΤ
ΕΤΖΝΝΜΠΗΥΕ · ΑΥΩ ΠΑΕΙΩΤ ΝΑΤΜΟ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΝ ΠΟΕΙΚ ΜΜΕ ·

O my mother, even if you did indeed spend nine months bearing me in your holy womb,

I for my part will bear you in the bowels of my mercy

and if you nursed me on your knees and with your arms,

I for my part will set you on a glorious throne at the right hand of me and my good Father.

If you wrapped me in swaddling clothes on the day when you gave birth to me and laid me in a manger (Luke 2:7) and an ox and an ass overshadowed me (Isa 1:3),

I for my part will shelter you with the wings of the Seraphim.

And if you kissed me with your mouth and nursed me with your virgin milk,

I for my part will embrace you in the presence of my Father who is in the heavens and my Father will nourish you with the true bread (John 6:32).

The sermon concludes with the account of the Virgin's death, the preparation of her body for burial, her reappearance (or that of her soul) on a chariot of

42 For the most recent treatment of this tradition, see S.J. SHOEMAKER, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford Early Christian Studies), Oxford 2002.

light, the procession with her body to the tomb during which angels come and bear her body away, and a final appearance of Jesus to reassure his disciples with the command to celebrate the feast of her death on the 21st of the month of Tobe. It is obvious that the sermon was composed to be read on that date.

The other sermon attributed to Evodius of Rome has many features in common with this one, but, from a rhetorical point of view, shows notable differences.⁴³ As in the case of the sermon on the Virgin, this one also has an unusually long inscription with fictive elements. Evodius is named the second «patriarch and archbishop of Rome» after Peter and the sermon is said to have been delivered on the feast of the Resurrection on the day when he baptized «Didymus the Jew and high priest» during the consulate of Claudius the emperor. Didymus had supposedly been spared expulsion when Claudius had expelled all the other Jews. This notable error of chronology suggests that the author was not acquainted with the Eusebian traditions about the death of Peter and Paul during the reign of Nero or was confused about the chronology of the emperors.⁴⁴ As in the previous sermon, Evodius presents himself in the sermon as an eyewitness of the events he relates: «Rather, I too was there when this was about to happen» (§4).⁴⁵

One of the striking features of this composition is the amount of legal language employed in it. The opening line states that «it is the custom of the Romans to establish justice at all times because they are lovers of mankind» and the author seems to suggest that the Romans have made use of the Scriptures as well. The phrase «the laws of the Romans» (**NNOMOC NNEZPΩMAIOC**) occurs numerous times (§§1,4,46,51) and once the phrase «the entire law code of the Romans» (**TNOMOTHYCIA THPC NNEZPΩMAIOC**). Roman legal practice is portrayed favorably: «the Romans strive for all justice to stand» (§23); «the laws are carried out in that city» (§25). When Pilate announces that he will wash his hands, he is made to say, «For it is Solon and Dracon who have established the laws of my people. They command my people as follows: when

43 For a summary of the linguistic similarities, see the article «A Homily on the Death of the Virgin Mary» in this volume, 135-147.

44 See EUSEBIUS, *Hist. eccl.* 2.22, in *Eusèbe de Césarée: Histoire ecclésiastique* (SCh 31), ed. G. Bardy, Paris 1986, 83-85. The History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria does not relate the death of Peter and Paul. Peter sends Mark to Alexandria in the fifteenth year after the Ascension. See B. EVETTS, *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria (Severus of Ashmunein) 1. Saint Mark to Theonas (300)*, (PO I, 2), Paris 1910, pt. I, ch. 1, 140.

45 The numbers are those of Depuydt's edition (see note 36 above).

the accusers stand up to prove someone's guilt, let not the judge pronounce a sentence because he will be worthy of responsibility and the person's blood will come on the head of the witnesses». Evodius continues: «The latter statement the Romans found in the teaching of the wise man Moses». (§46)

Much of the sermon reads like a legal review of the trial of Jesus in which the author argues against the charges of the Jews and portrays them as the lawless ones for bringing false charges. When Evodius arrives at the scene of Jesus before Pilate, he states «he (Pilate) ordered that the prosecutors (ΚΑΤΗΓΟΡΟΣ) speak first in accordance with the law of the Romans. Indeed, I recall that I said at the beginning of the homily (ΤΑΡΧΗ ΝΟΥΠΟΘΕΣΙΣ) that the Romans strive for all justice to stand. For the prosecutors were numerous, but a true crime was not found». Here the translator has rendered the phrase as ΤΑΡΧΗ ΝΟΥΠΟΘΕΣΙΣ «the beginning of the homily». However, the word *ὑπόθεσις* has a technical legal meaning translated in Latin as «causa». ⁴⁶ Thus it refers to a legal process, which strengthens the impression that the author understands himself to be relating a legal process and thinking in terms of legal (forensic) rhetoric. This is further underlined by Evodius' answer to his own rhetorical question in an apostrophe to the Jews: «Why are you condemning Christ, O Jews? Tell me the crime. It is I who speak to you in his defense» (§17). In fact, the sermon is at the same time a defense of Jesus and a case for the prosecution of the Jews.

THE USE OF SCRIPTURE AND THE TECHNIQUE OF COMPOSITION

About half way through the sermon (§40), the author introduces a hypothetical objection «someone who is among the brothers will tell me, “You have added to the words of the holy gospel”». There follows a lengthy and elaborate explanation and justification of the author's method of composition:

The wool provided for the purple cloth of the king, before its mixtures, with which it is dyed, are applied to it, can be made useful by being fabricated into clothing and being worn as one pleases. Yet when it is worked upon and dyed in colorful mixtures, it becomes exceedingly brilliant and becomes radiant clothing, so that the king wears it. Thus the holy gospels, when he who will be ordained a shepherd acts according to their words and reveals them, become illuminated exceedingly. And they are very brilliant in the heart of those who

46 See LAUSBERG, *Handbuch*, §73. The distinction of thesis and hypothesis apparently goes back to Hermagoras. See KENNEDY, *Classical Rhetoric*, 99.

listen. Indeed the king will not find fault if beautifully crafted plaits are added to his garments, but he will commend those who have added them exceedingly, so that everyone might praise the garment because of the plaits which are on it. Thus, the Lord Jesus will not find fault with us if we add a few embellishments to the holy gospels, but he will commend us all the more and bless those who bear fruit through them.

The justification continues with the observation that there are many matters not treated in the gospels, which the customs of the church have established, citing also John 21:25 that there are many things Jesus did that are not contained in the gospel.

In fact the compositional technique of this writer is to embroider on the words of the gospel. An example will serve to illustrate his method. After citing Pilate's question to Christ «Where are you from?» (John 19:9), «Evodius» continues:

When the judge saw that he did not reply on his own behalf, he spoke according to the authority of the world threateningly, «Why do you not speak to me? Do you not know that I am a governor and that you have been delivered to me so that I might act toward you according to my authority? If I wish to release you, there is no one who will be able to contradict me. And if I wish to crucify you, there is no one who will be able to oppose me». (cf. John 19:10) «As for me, I am without sin, O governor, and I want to die for the sins of the entire world until I purify it. I want to draw the burden upon myself in order that that which I have formed walks swiftly into the kingdom while there is no one restraining them. My father has given you this authority, O governor, and I will not disobey you, O governor. I am an obedient God and I have humbled myself because of his will». (cf. John 19:11)

This technique of embroidery or expansion is repeated throughout the homily.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the four homilies or sermons discussed above, we have noted four different ways of relating to the Scriptures. The first homily attributed to Athanasius follows the classical pattern established by Origen of citing the text in short pericopes and then offering commentary.⁴⁷ In this case most of John 11 is quoted.

⁴⁷ See SHERIDAN, *Rufus of Shotep*, 37-8. The homilies by Rufus are the only ones known in Coptic that follow Origen's practice of preaching on the basis of *lectio continua* of a biblical book.

The second homily, also attributed to Athanasius, is text based in the sense that texts of Genesis and John are used as the point of departure for commentary. The third composition, the first of the Evodius pieces, is not text based in the same sense, although it contains numerous citations of and allusions to Scriptural texts. Its point of departure is rather praise of the Virgin centering on her death, an event narrated in the apocryphal tradition rather than in Scripture. It belongs to the genre of encomium rather than that of text based homily. The fourth sermon, also of Evodius, uses the passion narrative as a basis for its own narrative of the trial of Jesus, but embroiders and expands on it rather than commenting or interpreting it. This last sermon shows extensive affinity with the forensic rhetorical tradition. In all four of these sermons extensive use is made of traditional rhetorical figures and devices such as the elaborate exordium, apostrophe, anaphora and antitheses. These compositions, apparently original in Coptic, show a certain acquaintance with the high rhetorical style of Greek works of the late fourth and early fifth centuries and are a witness to the Coptic literary culture of the fifth and sixth centuries.

Only a detailed analysis of all the literary compositions that fall into the broad category of homily or sermon in terms of their literary genre and their use of rhetorical devices, tropes, etc. will make it possible eventually to write a history of this material, which extends over a period of more than five hundred years. This could be facilitated if editors and translators were to take into account the ancient rhetorical forms and keep in mind that ancient writers did not think in terms of neatly organized paragraphs developing a theme in the manner of modern writers, but rather in terms of exordium, apostrophe, anaphora and all the other traditional rhetorical devices that could be inserted into the composition.⁴⁸ In fact, almost everything remains to be done in this field. The purpose of this article has been to offer a few hints regarding the complex nature of the task.

48 In this regard it may be useful to underline the importance of the study of the *progymasmata* or preliminary exercises in composition in later Greek rhetorical education. Varying lists of these exercises are given by ancient authors. See KENNEDY, *Classical Rhetoric*, 52-73. Kennedy observes: «Much of later Greek literature can be analyzed in terms of structural units such as the narrative, the *thesis*, the *synkrisis*, and the *ecphrasis*, which are used as building blocks for larger works» (53). That this should hold true for the Coptic homilies analyzed here is hardly surprising, since the models were Greek. See now also G.A. KENNEDY, *Progymasmata. Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*, Atlanta 2003.

MARY IN THE EARLY COPTIC TRADITION¹

THE EGYPTIAN CHURCH AND THE COPTIC LANGUAGE

Christianity penetrated into Egypt from the great Hellenistic city of Alexandria and spread first of all among the Greek speaking population. In Egypt Greek had been spoken since the conquest of the country by Alexander the Great in 332 BC, thanks also to the foundation of the city of Alexandria in 331, which quickly became one of the most important cities of the Hellenistic and then of the Roman worlds.

The word «Coptic» as used here denotes the part of the Egyptian Church that spoke and wrote the Egyptian language in the form that we now call «Coptic». In antiquity no one thought of a «Coptic Church» but of the Church in Egypt, which traced its origin back to the preaching of the evangelist Mark (according to the tradition reported by Eusebius) or later of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, which included the entire Church in Egypt. From 576 AD onwards there existed a non-Chalcedonian hierarchy (formerly called Jacobite). Only much later, when Europeans had discovered the ancient language of the Egyptian Church, did the Church itself come to be called the Coptic Church. The name comes from the Arab conquerors, who began to rule Egypt in the seventh century with the taking of Pelusium (640), the fortress «Babylon», now called «Old Cairo» (641), and Alexandria (642). The conquerors referred to the local population as «Copts» (by aphoresis of the Greek name for Egypt: Αἴγυπτος: *ghypt* - *qibt* - *coptus*).² The Coptic language is the final development of the ancient Egyptian language. The earlier written forms of the language, hieroglyphics and hieratic had not been used for centuries for normal everyday purposes, since for practical reasons demotic (a cursive form of writing) was

1 This essay was originally published in Italian as: «Maria nell'area culturale copta», in *Storia della Mariologia 1. Dal modello biblico al modello letterario*, ed. E. Dal Covolo - A. Serra, Roma 2009, 337-349.

2 The modern word «Copt» refers to a Christian native of Egypt. The Greek name for Egypt seems to have come from the Egyptian designation for the temple of Ptah at Memphis (*Het ka-Ptah*). See P. DU BOURGUET, «Copt», in *The Coptic Encyclopedia* 2, ed. A. Atiya, New York 1991, 599-601, and B. LAYTON, *A Coptic Grammar* (Porta Linguarum Orientalium), Wiesbaden 2000, 2.

used and this in turn was substituted by Greek in the civil administration of the Roman Empire. Although non-systematic attempts to write the demotic language with Greek characters from the first century onwards are documented, it seems likely that the creation of literary Coptic in the course of the third century was an attempt on the part of a cultivated bilingual elite to revive the Egyptian language as a literary instrument.³

The Coptic script makes use of the Greek alphabet together with six or seven (it depends on which dialect) characters borrowed from the demotic form of writing to indicate sounds that are not found in the Greek alphabet. There exist documents from the fourth century using this script in a variety of dialects, for example, «old» Bohairic, Fayumic, Achmimic, and Sahidic. The latter dialect soon became the most widely used literary dialect and it seems that the first great literary monument in the Coptic language was the translation of the Christian Scriptures into Sahidic Coptic. Although the greater part of early Coptic literature consists of translations of Greek works, it is possible that some apocryphal writings were produced in Coptic. Original works of Christian literature written in Sahidic Coptic from the fourth to the seventh centuries include numerous lives of saints, homilies, catecheses, monastic rules, letters and exhortations. For the period under consideration here (3rd to 8th centuries), it is not advisable to use documents in Bohairic, even if they claim to be from these centuries, because often they have been not only translated from Sahidic but extensively reworked and thus reflect a later period (from the ninth century onwards).

After the Arab invasion (642), the language of the conqueror (Arabic) supplanted Greek as the language of administration beginning around 700. Coptic also slowly died out in daily use and it is used now only in the liturgy.

When one speaks of Coptic literature, it is important to keep in mind that the greater part (as much as 90%) of the literature that once existed in Coptic has been lost because of the destruction of the monastic libraries. That which remains (together with works translated into Arabic from Coptic) offers only a fragmentary vision of the devotion of the ancient Church.

MARY IN THE SAHIDIC COPTIC LITERATURE

Fragments exist in Sahidic of the Protoevangelium of James, the apocryphal writing that contains the oldest Marian legend, which can be dated to the

3 See T. ORLANDI, «La patrologia copta», in *Complementi Interdisciplinari di Patrologia*, ed. A. Quacquarelli, Roma 1989, 459-461.

second century after Christ⁴. The Coptic translation was made perhaps in the fourth or fifth century. This writing, as is well-known, is notable for the idea of the virginity of Mary *in partum* and *post partum*. It also contains the first literary evidence of an iconographic model known as *Maria lactans* (Latin) or *Maria galaktrophusa* (Greek), that is, the Virgin feeding the child Jesus, which in the period after the Council of Chalcedon will acquire theological significance. It is less clear whether there existed a Coptic version of the Gospel of Bartholomew, although several fragments show an affinity to this tradition.⁵ In one fragment Jesus offers the greeting of peace to his disciples and to «Mary my mother, true virgin, spiritual field, treasure of pearls, ark of salvation for all the sons of Adam, she who bore the body of the Son of God and his true blood».⁶ The terminology, however, suggests a post-Chalcedonian situation. Another apocryphal writing for which there exist Coptic fragments is the Ascension of Isaiah.⁷ In the second part the nativity of the Lord and the virginity of Mary *in conceptione et in partu* are mentioned.⁸

Earlier it was thought that a papyrus fragment was evidence of the existence of the Marian hymn *Sub tuum presidium* in Egypt already in the second century, but more recent scholarship suggests a later date.⁹ The terminology found in it (*theotokos*) also suggests a date not earlier than the fifth century. Actually, this hymn found in almost all rites, has not been preserved in Coptic.¹⁰ The situation regarding the liturgy (celebration of the Eucharist) is more favorable. A portion of the *Liturgy of St. Basil* is preserved in a Sahidic manuscript copied from a

4 M. GEERARD, *Clavis Apocryphorum Novi Testamenti* (Corpus Christianorum), Turnhout 1992; M. ERBETTA, *Gli apocrifi del nuovo testamento I/2*, Casale Monferrato 1981, 7-43.

5 ERBETTA, *Gli apocrifi I/2*, 289.

6 E. REVILLOUT, *Les évangiles des douze apôtres et de saint Barthélemy* (PO 2), Paris 1907, 185-198; G. Giamberardini, *Il culto mariano in Egitto I, Sec. I-VI* (Pubblicazioni dello Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Analecta 6), Jerusalem 1975, 56.

7 J.-C. HAELEWYCK, *Clavis Apocryphorum Veteris Testamenti* (Corpus Christianorum), Turnhout 1998, 179 §218, P. BETTILOLO, «Ascensione di Isaia. Versioni copte. Introduzione, edizione e traduzione», in *Ascensio Isaiae. Textus Commentarius* (Corpus Christianorum. Series Apocryphorum 7-8), ed. P. Bettiolo et al., Turnhout 1995.

8 GIAMBERARDINI, *Il culto mariano I*, 52.

9 See H. FÖRSTER, «Die älteste marianische Antiphon - eine Fehldatierung? Überlegungen zum "ältesten Beleg" des Sub tuum praesidium», *Journal of Coptic Studies* 7 (2005) 99-110.

10 H. QUECKE, «Das "Sub tuum praesidium" in koptischen Horologion», *Enchoria* 1 (1971) 9-17.

seventh century original.¹¹ Capelle thought that this «archaic» text goes back to the beginning of the fourth century.¹² The text contains the commemoration of Mary as in the Greek text of the same liturgy: «may the holy and glorious ever virgin Mary, Mother of God (*theotokos*), have mercy on us all through her prayers».¹³ The other Coptic anaphoras in Bohairic reflect a later period.

SERMONS

Possibly also from the fourth century we have a sermon in Sahidic attributed to Saint Athanasius delivered, according to the heading, after his second return from exile (346).¹⁴ The sermon contains various subjects, but the original nucleus could be about the Nativity and in defense of the Virgin against the Arians. It recounts the journey of Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Then in praise of the Virgin, Adam, Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel and David are invoked. The parallelism between Eve and Mary is well developed. Jesus is called «tree of life» and the connection between the Incarnation and the Eucharist is emphasized. Mary is more privileged than the angels: «In fact, the angels and the archangels serve with fear the one who dwells in your womb and do not dare to speak; you, on the other hand, speak freely with him». Mary's role as mediatrix is also hinted at.

In his first letter to the virgins, Athanasius, after having insisted on her perpetual virginity, proposes Mary as a model of the ascetic life for virgins. She did not go about in the streets, but remained at home in tranquillity. She gave the fruit of her work to the poor, did not gaze out from the window but studied the Scriptures. She prayed to God in private, struggled against the wicked thoughts, against anger. She did not speak badly of others, was not proud, but humble and modest and made spiritual progress every day. She was also a model in regard to the body: she ate and slept only as much as necessary.¹⁵

11 J. DORESSE - E. LANNE, *Un témoin archaïque de la liturgie copte de S. Basile* (BMus 47), Louvain 1960. Lanne notes that, although the writing of the manuscript can be dated to the end of the eighth century or the beginning of the ninth, the Archbishop Benjamin (622-662) is mentioned in the commemoration of the living.

12 DORESSE - LANNE, *Un témoin archaïque*, II, 74.

13 DORESSE - LANNE, *Un témoin archaïque*, 26.

14 In the Greek Clavis (CPG 2187) it is classified under «dubia». See GIAMBERARDINI, *Il culto mariano* 1, 143-149. L.-Th. LEFORT, «L'homélie de S. Athanase des Papyrus de Turin», *Le Muséon* 71 (1958) 5-50; 209-239.

15 ATHANASE, «Sur la virginité [Lettre aux vierges]», in S. ATHANASE: *Lettres festales et pastorales en copte*, ed. L.-Th. Lefort (CSCO 150, 151; *Scriptores coptici* 19, 20; Louvain: Durbecq, 1955) CSCO 150: p. 78; CSCO 151: p. 60.

The Coptic literature of the fifth and sixth centuries bears the stamp of the Christological controversies, which were the cause of the Councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451). At the beginning and at the center of these controversies was the title *theotokos* (Mother of God), attributed to the Virgin Mary already in the fourth century, but rejected by Nestorius, the bishop of Constantinople, in favor of the title *christotokos* (Mother of Christ). As is well known, the bishop of Alexandria, Cyril, made himself the principal defender of the title against Nestorius. From the Alexandrian point of view, to reject the title *theotokos* meant also the rejection of the divinity of Jesus Christ and thus the denial of the Incarnation and the salvation by means of him. A work by Cyril on the Council of Ephesus and a work in defense of the twelve anathemas pronounced against Nestorius by Cyril have been preserved in Coptic.¹⁶ Here it will be sufficient to cite the first anathema: «If someone does not profess that Emmanuel is truly God and that accordingly the holy Virgin is Mother of God [θεοτόκος] (in fact she generated according to the flesh the Word born of God, who made himself flesh [Gv 1,14]), may he be anathema».¹⁷

The homiletic literature also developed in the context of these controversies. Two homilies on the Virgin Mary and on the Nativity that exist only in Sahidic Coptic are also attributed to Cyril.¹⁸ In the first of these Mary is described as Mother of God, queen of all and true bride. The image of *Maria lactans* (Mary nursing) is emphasized as a way of insisting on the true humanity of the Son of God and thus also of the reality of the Incarnation. The homily also describes the human relations between Jesus and Mary, how he sat on her knees, how he called her «mother», how he walked, etc. Mary recounts the principal events of her life. As in the letter of Athanasius mentioned above, Mary is proposed as a model for all the women who seek to imitate the Virgin: her food was simple, she did not frequent the public baths, etc. At the end of the sermon we find a prayer addressed to the Virgin imploring her to intercede with her Son, who is God, so that he will pardon our sins. Mary is said to be more exalted than the

16 This latter work exists also in the Greek original: CPG 5223. PG 76, 293-312. For the former, see, T. ORLANDI, *Clavis copta* 0096 (PN 131.1.11). The Coptic Clavis may be found at: <http://rmcisadu.let.uniroma1.it/~cmcl/>

17 For a collection of all the more important documents of these controversies, see: M. SIMONETTI, *Il Cristo 2. Testi teologici e spirituali in lingua greca dal IV al VII secolo* (Fondazione Lorenzo Valla), Milano 1986, and for this quotation, p. 379.

18 CPG 5274 and 5276. E.A.W. BUDGE, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts in the Dialect of Upper Egypt 1-2* (Coptic Texts V), London 1915, 139-146 (text), 717-724(tr.) and F. ROSSI, *I Papiri Copti del Museo Egizio di Torino 2*, Turin 1892, fasc. 2, p. 5

cherubim and the seraphim and more blessed than the thrones (cf. Col 1:16), because she is loved by Christ.

Another opponent of Nestorius from the same period was Proclus of Cyzicus, who himself later became bishop of Constantinople (434-446). Coptic fragments exist of his sermon *De laudibus s. Mariae*.¹⁹ Another sermon attributed to him exists only in Coptic fragments.²⁰ In it Mary is described as: «Virgin giving birth and midwife, virgin because she did not know man, giving birth because she was pregnant for nine months, mid-wife because with her own hands she wrapped the child in swaddling clothes and laid him in the manger». ²¹ Mary is also called «Deipara» [God-begetting] (ⲛⲣⲉϥⲁⲡⲉⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ), the Coptic equivalent of the Greek (θεοτόκος), which is also found in the text (ΘΕΟΔΩΚΟΣ).²² This sermon is particularly interesting because it offers evidence of the existence of and the date of the feast of the Nativity distinct from the feast of the Epiphany. It is asserted several times in the text that it is a question of celebrating a feast and the date is also indicated, the 29th of the month of *Koiak*, the day of the Nativity for the Egyptians, which corresponds to December 25 in the Julian calendar (January 7 in the Gregorian calendar).²³

From the sixth century there are several witnesses to devotion to the Virgin. In the homilies of Rufus of Shotep (toward the end of the sixth century) we find an interesting interpretation of Mary as a model for nuns.²⁴ Commenting on the words «when he went in to her, he said to her, “Hail, you who have found favor. The Lord be with you”» (Luke 1:28), Rufus offers an allegorical interpretation of the words, «when he went in to her» in order to arrive at the idea of the interior life. He asks, «What is this “going in to her”? Where is Mary?» Then he answers that: «the text is informing us of the hidden life of the virgin and of her interior way of life and of her tranquillity». Mary does not answer in haste and without reflection as Eve had done. Mary knows the Scriptures and had studied the Law and the Prophets. She examines the words of the angel with her mind and like a good steersman, who holds on to the rudder firmly in order to avoid

19 CPG 5800. See ORLANDI, *Clavis copta* 0320.

20 ROSSI, *I Papiri Copti* 2, 2, 48 – 77 (text); 104 – 112 (tr.).

21 ROSSI, *I Papiri Copti* 2, 2, frag. 10, p. 57 (text); p. 107 (tr.).

22 ROSSI, *I Papiri Copti* 2, 2, frag. 13, p. 60 (text); p. 108 (tr.).

23 GIAMBERARDINI, *Il culto mariano* 1, 140.

24 J.M. SHERIDAN, *Rufus of Shotep. Homilies on the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Introduction, Text, Translation, Commentary* (Unione Accademica Nazionale, Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari), Roma 1998, 230-232.

shipwreck, so also the Virgin grasped firmly her reason and her thoughts with attention in order to avoid spiritual shipwreck.

The word for «attention» in Coptic (ⲪⲚⲟⲩⲧⲓⲪⲧⲏⲩ) probably reflects the Greek concept of *prosoché* which had already had a long career in the philosophical tradition and which Athanasius had used to describe what Antony did as he began to live a monastic life.²⁵ Thus Mary becomes a model for all virgins. She is also described in these homilies with the title θεοτόκος. We also have several writings, probably from the sixth century, which bear witness to the celebration of the feast of the death, transitus, or dormition (falling asleep)²⁶ of the Virgin. A sermon on the life and death of the Holy Virgin Mary is attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem; it is certainly pseudepigraphal.²⁷ The sermon begins with a antidoctetist polemic against Ebion and Harpocrates, who had taught that the Virgin is «a power of God who took the form of a woman». It includes a piece where Mary speaks to Cyril, then it recounts the genealogy of Mary including her parents Joachim and Anna. The latter go to the temple where they beg the Lord to give them a child, which they promise to dedicate to the temple for life. Their request is granted and they give the name Mary to the little girl.

After three years they bring the child to the temple and place her at the feet of the priests. «The little virgin served in the temple together with other older virgins». Then the Annunciation, the birth of Jesus, the flight into Egypt and the stay there (with many miracles and wonders). At this point the sermon is interrupted with more polemic against Ebion and Harpocrates and with insistence on the one nature of Jesus (the terminology preferred by Cyril of Alexandria). Then there follows a piece on the relationship between Mary and Elizabeth. After the death and resurrection of Jesus, Mary lives another ten years in Jerusalem with John. The last part of the sermon is dedicated to the death (*transitus*) of the Virgin, to her last recommendations to the apostles Peter, James and John. After a final prayer of the Virgin, «the Lord Jesus Christ arrives, carried by the cherubim and preceded by the angels». He said to his mother, «Do not be terrified by death. The life of the whole world is (standing) in front of you». When Mary saw him, «her soul jumped into the arms of her Son, who covered

25 M. SHERIDAN, «“Steersman of the Mind”. The Virgin Mary as Ideal Nun (an interpretation of Luke 1:29 by Rufus of Shotep)», in this volume, 31-36.

26 The term «dormition» (falling asleep) does not necessarily mean that she did not die, since the Greek equivalent (κοίμησις) is a standard Christian paraphrase for death.

27 A. CAMPAGNANO, *Ps. Cirillo di Gerusalemme. Omelie Copte sulla Passione, sulla Croce e sulla Vergine* (Testi e Documenti per lo Studio dell'Antichità 66), Milano 1980, 152–195.

her with a celestial mantle». Then Jesus gives instructions to the apostles for the burial of Mary's body in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Meanwhile the Jews hear of the death of Mary and try to burn her body. The apostles flee, but the Jews do not succeed in finding the body because of a divine intervention. A voice from heaven is directed to the Jews «No one should seek the body of the Virgin until the great day of the advent of the Savior». The sermon closes with the news that the Virgin lived sixty years, that she was fifteen years old when she gave birth to Jesus, that she lived eleven and a half years after the Resurrection and that her life came to an end on the 21st of *Tobe*.

Another sermon that recounts the *transitus* of Mary is attributed to Evodius, «the successor of Peter at Rome» (obviously pseudonymous); there exist three versions, one in Sahidic preserved entire in a manuscript of the Monastery of St. Michael, fragments of another Sahidic one and a Bohairic version from the Monastery of St. Macarius.²⁸

In the complete Sahidic version, only the final part is dedicated to the death of the Virgin. The first part contains praise of the Virgin as *theotokos* and insists on the reality of the divinity and humanity of Jesus, first as a child and then in his adult life. The central part contains a polemic against the Jews, in reality a polemic against all who do not accept the full reality of his divinity or the full reality of the Incarnation. The polemic is directed implicitly against the Nestorians and against those who accept the language of the Council of Chalcedon.²⁹

In the part which recounts the *transitus* of Mary, the apostles and the other disciples, Evodius included, together with Mary the Mother of the Lord, Salome and the other women who followed Jesus, were gathered together for the «breaking of the bread» (Acts 2:42) before going to the regions assigned to them for the preaching of the Gospel. It was the 20th of the month of *Tobe* (January 15) and Jesus appears in their midst. He tells his mother not to be sad because she is about to leave the body «like every human». Jesus prepares special linen sheets for his mother and invites her to lie down in the midst of these clothes. Then he

28 The complete Sahidic version has been published by S.J. SHOEMAKER, «The Sahidic Coptic Homily on the Dormition of the Virgin Attributed to Evodius of Rome. An Edition from Morgan MSS 596 & 598 with Translation», *Analecta Bollandiana* 14 (1999) 241-283. The fragments of the other Sahidic manuscript were published by: F. ROBINSON, *Coptic Apocryphal Gospels, Translations together with the Texts of Some of them* (Texts and Studies 4.2), Cambridge 1896, 67-89. The Bohairic version may be found in: P. DE LAGARDE, *Aegyptiaca*, Göttingen 1883, 38-63.

29 M. SHERIDAN, «A Homily on the Death of the Virgin Mary attributed to Evodius of Rome», in this volume, 135-147.

leaves the room, «because it is not possible for death to enter the place where life is found». Salome and Joanna bring Jesus the news of the death of Mary and he goes to prepare her body for burial. To console the apostles and disciples, a large luminous chariot arrives surrounded by a multitude of angels with a high and glorious throne and «our Lady seated on the throne» offers the peace of her Son to all. Jesus gives instructions for the burial of his mother's body and climbs onto the chariot with his virgin mother and ascends to heaven. When the apostles reached the Valley of Jehoshaphat, a multitude of angels come from heaven, take the body and fly on high with it. Jesus appears again and says: «Regarding her body, my Father has commanded that it be placed in the perfume of the tree of life, that is, the place of repose of his beloved Son, that is I».

A different tradition is found in a sermon attributed to the Patriarch Theodosius († 567 AD).³⁰ After a long introductory section that speaks of all the virtues of the Virgin, the author announces that «we will continue up to the death and assumption of this holy virgin according to the account that we found with its details in the ancient writings preserved at Jerusalem and that came into my possession in the library of Saint Mark in Alexandria».³¹ After a brief summary of the economy of salvation that concludes with the Ascension of Jesus, he explains that Mary remained in Jerusalem together with Peter and John. One day (the 20th of *Tôbe* = January 15) she received a vision of her immanent death. There follows a long description of the horrors of death and a long prayer of Mary that she should be spared these. Then Jesus arrives on a luminous chariot and invites his mother to leave the earth. The apostles and virgins beg the Lord not to take the Virgin from them, but Jesus explains that all must die. However, she will remain in the tomb only 206 days, after which she will «receive back the same body in which you now see her, in order to transport her to the heavenly heights near to the Father and the Holy Spirit so that she may dwell there and offer supplications for all of you». Her death follows and Jesus gives instructions for her burial and ascends on high with his mother's soul to deliver it to the Father and Holy Spirit. Then, as in the sermon of Cyril, the Jews hear of her death and seek to burn the body without success because of a miracle. After the burial the apostles and dis-

30 ERBETTA, *Gli apocrifi* I/2, 583-591; M. CHAINE, «Sermon de Théodose Patriarche d'Alexandrie sur la Dormition et l'Assomption de la Vierge», *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 29 (1933-4) 272-314; S.J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford Early Christian Studies), Oxford 2002, 58-59.

31 This is a commonplace. See GIAMBERARDINI, *Il culto mariano* I, 27, n.13, who observes that the library of Jerusalem is frequently introduced as the background for researches.

ciples return to Jerusalem, but visit the tomb often to sing songs and hymns. After 206 days, in the evening of the 15th of *Mesore* (the beginning of the 16th = August 15) the spend the whole night at the tomb watching and praying. Then a choir of angels arrives and Jesus on the cherubim chariot holding the soul of the Virgin. He commands the body to leave the tomb, the stone tomb suddenly opens and «the body of the venerable Virgin arose and embraced its soul». Then the Lord ascended to heaven and everyone returned to Jerusalem glorifying and thanking the Lord. The text closes with exhortations to virtue and mentions the commemoration of the holy Virgin on the 21th and 16th of each month. According to the historian Nicephorus Callisto, the emperor Mauritius (582-602) ordered that the feast of the Assumption should be celebrated solemnly.³² The sermon attributed to Theodosius reflects this second stage in the development of the devotion centered on the death of the Virgin. This sermon is the first Coptic witness to the double feast of the *transitus* and of the Assumption of Mary.³³

A sermon attributed to Theophilus of Alexandria († 412) reveals a quite different tendency in popular devotion. Actually the «sermon» is a typical Coptic pseudepigraphal writing probably from the seventh or eighth century. According to the title of the sermon, Theophilus delivered it on the 16th of *Mesore*, the date of the feast of the Assumption. The greater part of the work is devoted to an account of a miracle designed to emphasize the power of an image of the Virgin that a Jew had maltreated. The icon, painted on a piece of wood, broken in pieces and thrown into a trash receptacle by the Jew, produced a great quantity of blood. The miracle lead to the conversion of the Jew. The attitude described would have been more normal for an Arab of the seventh century than for a Jew of the fourth century.³⁴

32 SHOEMAKER, *Ancient Traditions*, 73. NICEPHORUS CALLISTUS, *Historia ecclesiastica*, t.17, 28 (PG 147, 292).

33 SHOEMAKER, *Ancient Traditions*, 58-62, accepts the authenticity of the attribution to Theodosius and the date of 567 found in the title. Erbetta (*Gli apocrifi* 1/2, 582-583) is more cautious. On the basis of this date, Shoemaker concludes that the sermons without the second feast of the Assumption are prior to 567. This conclusion seems too simple to me. These sermon titles are not always trustworthy and the reference to the library of Jerusalem is a commonplace. The Bohairic version of Evodius is certainly later and does not belong to the period under consideration but to the medieval period (9th century and after). According to Shoemaker, all the Coptic versions of the transitus of Mary presuppose Greek versions (not identical) in circulation in the fourth century: 76-77.

34 Thus Orlandi, who suggests also that it is possibly an anti-iconoclastic polemic or «contro gli Arabi non meno nemici dell'immagine umana o divina nei luoghi sacri». T. ORLANDI, *Omellie copte* (Corona Patrum), Torino 1981, 108.

Another sermon attributed to Theophilus, transmitted in Arabic, Syriac and Ethiopic (Ge'ez), but not easily datable to our period, narrates the flight of the Holy Family in Egypt with many miracles and describes the house where the Virgin lived with her beloved Son on the holy mountain of Coscam. The sermon, written for the feast of the Mother of God, which is celebrated the 21st of *Tobe*, is in the form of a revelation by the Virgin to Theophilus. The theme of the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt became very important in popular Coptic devotion.

Another witness to the celebration of the feast of the Nativity is found in a sermon on the Nativity by Damian, non-Chalcedonian Patriarch of Alexandria from 578 to 602.³⁵ In spite of the fragmentary condition of the manuscript, it is possible to determine that the feast was celebrated on the 29th of the month of *Koiak* (or December 25 in the Julian calendar). It contains abundant praise of the Virgin: Mary is a «pure field in which the pearl is located» and «adorned with every virtue». Her perpetual virginity and lack of pain in giving birth are underscored. The notion of *Maria lactans* is also emphasized in order to insist on the divinity and humanity of Jesus. The sermon also contains polemic against the heretics who deny the divinity of Christ and divide the Trinity (tri-theism), which is quite normal for this period (end of the sixth century) in the non-Chalcedonian Church.

Possibly inspired by Damian's sermon is another one attributed to a fictive person, Demetrius of Antioch, who supposedly ordained John Chrysostom a priest.³⁶ Actually John was ordained deacon by Meletius and priest by Flavian (bishop of Antioch from 381 to 404). No one with the name Demetrius is known to have been bishop of Antioch. Moreover the text speaks of Nestorius as already dead, which would be after 450. From these and other indications one may conclude that it is a case of deliberate false attribution to give authority to a text by an unknown author. From the mention of the Sabaeans (Arabs) the editor concluded that the sermon was likely to have been written some time after the Arab invasion of Egypt in 642.³⁷ The author shows a good knowledge of Mariological themes and may have been inspired by other texts already mentioned such as the Protoevangelium of James, the instruction of Pseudo-Cyril

35 See the Coptic clavis: <http://rmcisadu.let.uniroma1.it/~cmcl/>

36 K. MODRAS, *Omelia Copta attribuita a Demetrio di Antiochia sul Natale e Maria Vergine*, Roma 1994, 25-26

37 MODRAS, *Omelia Copta*, 27

about the life of the Virgin (550-600)³⁸, and the sermon of Pseudo-Theophilus on the flight into Egypt and Mount Coscam. The author emphasizes of course the virginity of Mary and her virtues and pictures her as the first nun describing her way of life using monastic terminology. In the praises of Mary he employs many terms and titles already found in the earlier tradition: she is called the «closed door» (Ezek 44:1-2) to indicate her perpetual virginity (*post partum*) and the divine maternity is described with many biblical images: the ark, the field with the precious pearl, the golden vase with the manna, the tent that hides God. She is said to give birth to the only-begotten of the Father and she is called *theotokos*. She did not suffer the pangs of childbirth. Moreover, Mary is raised above heaven and earth and is unique among all women. Not only is she Mother of God, but she takes care of those who are saved. She is Mother of all Christians, remains with them and intercedes for them.³⁹ The sermon may have been written in the period in which the tradition of the month of *Koiak* (the Marian month preceding Christmas) was developing in the Coptic Church⁴⁰.

In conclusion we may note that during this period in the Coptic speaking area we find all the themes and all the principal developments of the Mariology of this epoch: the perpetual virginity, the title Mother of God (*theotokos*), prayer requesting the intercession of the Virgin, Mary venerated as queen of all, the celebration of the Nativity, of the Dormition and Assumption and the memory of the journey of the Holy Family in Egypt.⁴¹

38 See note 27 above.

39 MODRAS, *Omelia Copta*, 41.

40 MODRAS, *Omelia Copta*, 29-30.

41 For the complexities of the manuscript tradition and the problems of transmission as well as for additional material from the Bohairic tradition, one should consult now: T. ORLANDI, *Coptic Texts relating to the Virgin Mary. An Overview* (Unione Accademica Nazionale, Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari, Letteratura copta, Serie Studi), Roma 2008.

THE ROLE OF MONASTICISM IN THE EGYPTIAN CHURCH¹

Despite extensive research in the last one hundred and fifty years, the origins of monasticism remain somewhat obscure before the fourth century. One difficulty is in knowing what criteria to use to determine or detect its presence. Certainly some of the elements present in what will be called monasticism in the fourth century, such as celibacy, were present earlier. Other elements that modern writers describe as «ascetic» may also be found earlier, but the word «ascetic» with its modern, often negative meaning, poses a danger of distortion when applied to antiquity, as we shall have occasion to note later.

The term *monachos* itself is first documented in papyri of the first part of the fourth century, 325 to be precise, and rapidly seems to have gained currency after that.² The context in which the word is first found suggests that it had been in common usage for at least a few decades. Other terms used to designate monks, such as renunciants (*apotaktikoi*), also came into common currency in the fourth century. We can conclude that monasticism emerged as a significant phenomenon in the church and society of Egypt in the first half of the fourth century. By the middle of the century, when Athanasius gave the movement its first great literary classic with his *Life of Antony*, it was playing an ever greater role in the life of the church.

In 1881 the noted German historian of the church, Adolf Harnack, published a small work entitled «Monasticism. Its Ideals and History».³ Harnack perceived a growing worldliness on the part of the church beginning already in the late second century and by the middle of the third century the church had «entered the world-state». He noted: «Thus it is that at the middle of the third century we find the church furnished with all the forces that a State

1 Originally published in German: «Die Rolle des Mönchtums in der Ägyptischen Kirche» in *Pro Oriente Jahrbuch* 2009, Wien 2010, 184-197.

2 E.A. JUDGE, «The Earliest Use of Monachos for “Monk” (P. Coll. Youtie 77) and the Origins of Monasticism», *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 20 (1977) 72-89.

3 A. HARNACK, *Das Mönchtum, seine Ideale und seine Geschichte*, Giessen 1881. An English translation was published twenty years later: A. HARNACK, *Monasticism. Its Ideals and History* and *The Confessions of St Augustine. Two Lectures*. London 1901.

and its culture could offer her, entering on all the relations of life, and ready for any concession which did not concern her creed».⁴ The growing worldliness of the church meant that she was «no longer in a position to give peace to all that came to her, and to shelter them from the world».⁵ The worldliness of the church was the context that gave rise to monasticism in Egypt according to Harnack: «In the course of the third century, there may already have been a few instances of individuals tired of the world, fleeing into the desert; nay, they may here and there have actually joined together for common life. At the opening of the the new century their number increased. They fled not the world only, but worldliness in the church; yet they did not therefore flee from the Church. Honors and riches, wife and children, they renounced in order to shun pleasure and sin, to give themselves up to the enjoyment of the contemplation of God, and to consecrate life by the preparation for death».⁶ Christianity was growing ever more indifferent and the «Church of Constantine drove into solitude and the desert those who wished to devote themselves to religion».⁷ And how did the Church react to these developments? As Harnack sees it, «She did the one thing left to secure her safety, in expressly approving the movement, nay, in bearing testimony that it realized the original ideal of the Christian life. ... The Church made a virtue of necessity».⁸ Harnack underlines this point: «It is one of the most striking historical facts that the Church, precisely at the time when she was becoming more and more a legal and sacramental institution, threw out an ideal of life which could be realized, not in herself, but only alongside herself. The more deeply she became compromised with the world, the higher, the more superhuman became her ideal».⁹ The Church, in Harnack's view had reduced Christianity by the fourth century to a shallow morality aiming to subject every thing to her poor moral rules and ordinances of worship. With the development and acceptance in the Church of the monastic movement there developed a double morality and a two tier Church. Although Harnack could express admiration for the original aims of the monastic movement, he clearly disapproved of this result. In a concluding peroration to this section of his essay, he writes: «But it is an evidence of the extraordinary force with which the

4 A. HARNACK, *Monasticism. Its Ideals and History*, 28.

5 HARNACK, *Monasticism. Its Ideals and History*, 35.

6 HARNACK, *Monasticism. Its Ideals and History*, 35-36.

7 HARNACK, *Monasticism. Its Ideals and History*, 43.

8 HARNACK, *Monasticism. Its Ideals and History*, 45.

9 HARNACK, *Monasticism. Its Ideals and History*, 46.

Church had established herself in the minds of men, that monasticism, on its first appearance, did not venture, like the Montanists, to criticize the Church, or to brand her path as a departure from the truth. If we consider what enthusiasm, nay, what a fanaticism, speedily developed in the monastic communities, we shall be astonished to observe how few and ineffective were the attacks on the Church – even though they were not altogether absent. Hardly a single man demanded a reform of Christianity generally. The movement might well have proved a revolution for the secular Church, yet in truth it did not turn her paths aside». ¹⁰ The key phrase is «a reform of the Church generally». Monasticism had not aimed at this and was therefore fundamentally a mistake. As becomes explicit at the end of his essay, for the reform of the Church generally, one had to wait for the message of Luther. ¹¹

Although this is history from a specifically evangelical theological point of view, Harnack makes many observations that are in fact worthy of consideration. If we cannot accept his ecclesiology, it may nevertheless be possible to take seriously the thesis that monasticism did in fact arise of the context of the growing worldliness of the Church. Recent developments in the sociology of religion can provide some tools with which to develop this thesis. The American sociologist Rodney Stark has written considerably on the sociology of religion recently and has proposed a number of general theses as well as some useful historical observations.

According to Stark, «pluralism is the natural or normal religious state of affairs», that is, «in the absence of repression, there will be multiple religious organizations. One reason for pluralism is that in any normal population people seem to differ according to the intensity of their religious desires and tastes. That is, some people are content with a religion that, although it promises less, also requires less. Others want more from their religion and are willing to do more to get it». He quotes Max Weber, who noted that «in every religion... people differ greatly on their religious capacities» and in every religion some people qualify as «religious virtuosi». ¹² Stark builds on this observation proposing that «religious diversity in all societies is rooted in social niches, groups of people sharing particular preferences concerning religious intensity». Most people, he observes, «want some intensity in their religion and will accept some costs, but

10 HARNACK, *Monasticism. Its Ideals and History*, 46-47.

11 HARNACK, *Monasticism. Its Ideals and History*, 115.

12 R. STARK, *For the Glory of God. How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-Hunts and the End of Slavery*, Princeton 2003, 17.

not too much of either. Some people will have little religious interest and will prefer to be involved as little as possible». In any society, as Weber noted, some people will aspire to a high-intensity faith. Stark insists that in any society where diversity is not suppressed, there will be a diversity in religious supply, because there is a diversity in religious demand. Concretely this means pluralism, the existence of multiple religious organizations.¹³

Christianity started out as a high intensity religion. In another earlier work he has traced the growth and diffusion of Christianity, as Harnack did earlier, in the first three centuries.¹⁴ He insists that a principal reason for the successful diffusion of Christianity was that, compared with paganism, it offered both greater rewards both in this life and in the next and that it made correspondingly higher demands. Contrary to the view of many historians beginning with Eusebius, Stark insists that Constantine was not responsible for the triumph of Christianity. «By the time he gained the throne, Christian growth already had become a tidal wave of exponential increase. If anything, Christianity played a leading role in the triumph of Constantine, providing him with substantial and well-organized urban support».¹⁵ What happened with Constantine turned out in fact to be a curse for the Church. Stark asserts that «he destroyed its most attractive and dynamic aspects, turning a high-intensity, grassroots movement into an arrogant institution controlled by an elite who often managed to be both brutal and lax».¹⁶ Constantine diverted the resources of the state from the support of the pagan temples to the support of the Christians. Suddenly within a few years Christianity became the most-favored recipient of the near limitless resources of imperial favor.¹⁷ This resulted in radical changes in the life of the Church. «A faith that had been meeting in humble structures was suddenly housed in magnificent public buildings – the new church of St. Peter built by Constantine in Rome was modeled on the basilican form used for imperial throne halls. A clergy recruited from the people and modestly sustained by member contributions suddenly gained immense power, status, and wealth as part of the imperial civil service. Bishops “now became grandees on a par with the wealthiest senators”».¹⁸

13 STARK, *For the Glory of God*, 18.

14 R. STARK, *The Rise of Christianity*, New York 1997.

15 STARK, *The Rise of Christianity*, 189.

16 STARK, *For the Glory of God*, 33.

17 STARK, *For the Glory of God*, 34.

18 STARK, *For the Glory of God*, 34.

Although Christianity was not yet the state religion, it had acquired a virtual monopoly on the resources available for the support of religion and monopoly, in Stark's view, inevitably leads to laxity. Christianity as such ceased to be a high intensity religion. «Privileges and exemptions granted to Christian clergy precipitated a stampede into the priesthood».¹⁹ This is the new context in which we see the rapid diffusion of monasticism in the first part of the fourth century. It provided an outlet for those who desired a high-intensity religion. Stark observes that one of the most impressive achievements of the Church is the way in which it has succeeded in encapsulating the sectarian impulse safely within the institutional structure. «Again and again, those most dedicated to a very high-intensity faith were channelled into religious orders, thereby put in the service to the Church rather than left to become its opponents».²⁰ Of course this resulted in the development of a two-tiered Christianity or as Stark puts it, two quite distinct churches, the Church of Power and the Church of Piety. The Church of Piety arose in many ways as «a reaction to the Church of Power, being made up of those who were still committed to the moral vision of early Christianity». Stark observes that «the Church of Piety might have been shunted aside to become an unsuccessful sect but for the fact that it had a solid institutional base in monasticism, which, in turn, was sustained primarily by the nobility and upper classes».²¹

The similarity to Harnack's view is clear, but the conclusion drawn is quite different. Not only is monasticism not a mistaken path for a reform of the whole Church that would take place only a thousand years later, but it corresponds to something fundamental in the human religious situation, the diversity of religious intensity present in all societies. It allowed for the development or continuation of a high-intensity Christianity alongside the lax form of the post-Constantinian era. In this view of things, the two-tiered moral structure that results is not an error but a sociological necessity. Monasticism thus plays the role of providing an outlet for the desire for a high-intensity Christianity and at least in theory a permanent witness to it. As we all know of course from subsequent history, monastic societies can also slide into laxity and lose this function. This leads to reform movements or to new religious societies.

It is time now to switch from what might be called a macrovision of the development of monasticism in Egypt to a micro-view and to an examination of

19 R. FLETCHER, *The Barbarian Conversion. From Paganism to Christianity*, Berkeley 1997, 38.

20 STARK, *For the Glory of God*, 40.

21 STARK, *For the Glory of God*, 40.

some of the concrete developments that took place in the relationship between the monastic movement in the Church in Egypt in the fourth and following centuries. We are all acquainted with the famous names associated with the rise of the movement: Antony, Amon, Macarius, Didymus, Pachomius, Shenoute, but from the point of view of the rapport between the movement and the Church the most important figure was not a monk but the bishop of Alexandria, Athanasius, who reigned from 328 to 373, the period in which Christianity in Egypt passed from being a minority to becoming a majority or a Christianity of the masses, as one writer had put it.²²

I have used the word «reigned» deliberately to emphasize the unusual structure of the Church in Egypt, for, as historians have noted, the Church of Egypt is the only one in the East to have developed a monarchical form of government.²³ The churches (dioceses) erected the length of the Nile valley beginning with the episcopate of Demetrios, maintained an absolute dependance regarding the mother-city. Created by the bishop of Alexandria, the Egyptian bishops were totally submitted to his direct authority. This structure was already in place before the Council of Nicaea. The Meletian schism of the early fourth century can be viewed as a rebellion against the authority of the bishop of Alexandria and was so viewed then by the bishop, Peter. The long reign of Athanasius, his pastoral visits throughout Egypt, his Festal letters, and forceful opposition to Arianism only served to reinforce this peculiar structure of the Egyptian Church. He seems to have been the first bishop of Alexandria to visit all of Egypt and the Pentapolis as well in the first six years of his episcopate.²⁴ All of this is worth noting, because it helps to explain his impact on the monastic movement.

Although Athanasius was not a monk – that terminology seems to have just been coming into use when he was elected – he was held to be an *asketes*.²⁵ At that time the majority of Christian ascetics, whom he refers to as *monazontes* and *parthenoi*,²⁶ were still living in the cities. The content of his first two Festal Letters suggests that he was well acquainted with the ascetic traditions in the Church. In the first Festal Letter he explained «fasting as a process by which the soul

22 A. MARTIN, *Athanase d'Alexandrie et l'Église d'Égypte au IV^e siècle (328-373)* (Collection de l'École Française de Rome 216), Roma 1996, 1.

23 MARTIN, *Athanase d'Alexandrie et l'Église d'Égypte*, 117, 165, 189, 191.

24 MARTIN, *Athanase d'Alexandrie et l'Église d'Égypte*, 5.

25 D. BRAKKE, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* (Oxford Early Christian Studies), Oxford 1995, 7.

26 BRAKKE, *Athanasius*, 9.

brings the body under the control of the will and gains access to special revelatory knowledge from God».²⁷ The next year he devoted his second Festal Letter to the theme of «withdrawal from the world». Such withdrawal, «achieved through practices of renunciation was necessary for the life of every Christian, not just for an ascetic elite».²⁸ Sometime before he was forced into exile for the second time in 339, he seems to have written his first Letter to Virgins in which he portrayed the Virgin Mary as a model for virgins, a silent, secluded and submissive girl. It has been suggested that in this way Athanasius hoped to neutralize the support that his Arian opponents received from numerous virgins. Virgins were not better than married women, but were themselves «brides of Christ» and so should behave in the manner of good obedient wives.²⁹

Athanasius returned in triumph from his exile in the West in 346. In the period since his election almost twenty years earlier the monastic movement had developed in an extraordinary manner. In the memorable phrase of Athanasius himself in the *Life of Antony*, the «desert was made a city by monks, who left their own people and registered themselves for the citizenship in the heavens» (*Vit. Ant.* 14). The desert communities of Nitria and Scetis, begun much earlier in the century and associated with the names of Ammoun and Macarius, were flourishing. Pachomius died in 347³⁰ and left a very large monastic federation consisting of no fewer than ten monasteries for men and women. Almost ten years later, the famous Antony died, just as Athanasius was to find himself once again in exile, this time in the desert with the monks. The following year Athanasius seems to have composed his *Life of Antony*, which was quickly translated into many other languages including Latin, Coptic and Syriac. Although Athanasius composed many other works dealing with the ascetic life before and after this one, *The Life of Antony* proved to be his most original, popular and effective work in this area. It is not an exaggeration to say that it is the work that has had the most lasting effects in establishing the role of monasticism in the Egyptian Church. It is perhaps a measure of its effectiveness that Harnack called it the most harmful work ever composed.³¹

27 BRÄKKE, *Athanasius*, 267.

28 BRÄKKE, *Athanasius*, 267.

29 BRÄKKE, *Athanasius*, 269.

30 A. CAMPLANI, «Sulle date del Sinodo di Latopoli e della morte di Pacomio», *Studia Monastica* 37 (1995) 7-18.

31 A. HARNACK, *Das Leben Cyprians von Pontus. Die erste christliche Biographie* (TU 39.3), Leipzig 1913, 81.

Whatever may have been the historical reality, Athanasius made Antony «the perfect instance of human appropriation of the Word's victory over sin and death: Antony's body is in the full control of his soul, which is in the full control of the Word of God».³² Inevitably Antony became an expression of Athanasius' own theological vision. This was a very original work, the first Christian biography of a holy man not a martyr and it was quickly and widely imitated. Its influence on later Christian hagiography was incalculable. Along with biblical models for holy men including the story of Jesus himself,³³ Athanasius was probably influenced by the biographies of philosophers of which there existed many from the time of Plato on. The *Life of Antony* proved to be Athanasius' most effective instrument in furthering his policy of integrating the ascetic movement into the service of the Church. This was perceived even by some contemporaries. In 380, just seven years after the death of Athanasius, Gregory Nazianzen composed an encomium on Athanasius in which he made these observations:

While he associated with them [the monks], the great Athanasius, just as he was the mediator and reconciler of all people, imitating him who made peace between disparate elements with his blood, so too he reconciled the solitary life with the shared by showing that the priesthood is philosophical and that philosophy requires a priesthood. For he harmonized the two and brought them into one – both quiet action and active quietness – in such a way that he convinced [the monks] that to be a monk is characterized more by the steadiness of one's conduct than by the withdrawal [ἀναχώρησις] of one's body.³⁴

It may be useful to note that the term philosophical life had already become synonymous in Christian usage with ascetic or monastic life. Much earlier in the same century Eusebius had described how Origen had taken up a philosophical form of life.

I would like now to refer to some specific passages in the *Life of Antony* to indicate some of the themes that Athanasius introduced. In chapters 46 and 47 Athanasius recounts how Antony went to Alexandria during the persecution of Maximin, for he yearned to suffer martyrdom or at least to render service to the confessors in the mines and in the prisons. He encouraged those who were

32 BRAKKE, *Athanasius*, 13.

33 A. DE VOGÜÉ, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'Antiquité. 1. Le monachisme latin de la mort d'Antoine à la fin du séjour de Jérôme à Rome (356-385)* (Patri-moines christianisme), Paris 1991, 78-79.

34 Quoted from: BRAKKE, *Athanasius*, 14. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oration 21*, 19.17-20.4.

called to martyrdom and remained with them to the end. Athanasius says that «he seemed like one who grieved because he had not been martyred, but the Lord was protecting him to benefit us and others, so that he might be a teacher to many in the discipline that he had learned from the Scriptures». After the persecution had ended and the bishop of Alexandria, Peter, had also been martyred Athanasius states: «Antony departed and withdrew once again to his cell, and was daily being martyred by his conscience, and doing battle in the contests of the faith». By this simple stroke of associating Antony with martyrdom both historically and spiritually, Athanasius managed to suggest that the monastic life was a continuation of the heroic age and life of the martyrs. To use the sociological terminology introduced earlier, it connected monasticism with that high-tension Christianity of an earlier period.

Athanasius also described Antony's goal and manner of life as a monk in terms stemming from an earlier tradition both Christian and philosophic. At the beginning of the Life, after a brief description of his parents, childhood, and the death of his parents when he was about twenty, Athanasius recounts how Antony was inspired by hearing the verse from the Gospel of Matthew, «If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven» (Matt 19:21) read in Church, to sell all that he had inherited and give it to the poor. Then, says Athanasius, «Placing his sister in the charge of respected and trusted virgins, and giving her over to the convent for rearing, he devoted himself from then on to the discipline rather than the household, giving heed to himself and patiently training himself. There were not yet many monasteries in Egypt, and no monk knew at all the great desert, but each of those wishing to give attention to his life disciplined himself in isolation, not far from his own village». Here Athanasius has introduced two technical terms, ultimately drawn from the Greek philosophical tradition, to describe Antony's action in taking up the life of a monk: *prosoche* (attention) and *askesis* (exercise or discipline).

2.1.1 *Prosoche*

Prosoche can be translated as «attention to oneself» or «being vigilant over oneself». It is found in the Scriptures as a verbal admonition.³⁵ Philo of Alex-

where are
numbers 1
and 2?

35 E.g., Deut 4:23; 8:1; Prov 2:1; 4:1, 20. See R. VERNAY, «Attention», in *Dictionnaire de la Spiritualité* 1, Paris 1937, 1058-1077.

andria uses it to describe the ascetic practice of the patriarch Jacob.³⁶ Clement of Alexandria and Origen see it as an essential element in the development of the spiritual life, a continual concentration on the present moment, which must be lived as if it were the first and the last; in this way *prosoche* is closely linked to mindfulness of death. In chapter 19 of the *Vita Antonii* Antony quotes Paul saying «I die daily» (1Cor 15:31) and adds «If we practise in this way and live like this day by day, we shall not sin». The word also means living constantly in the presence of God with the awareness of the presence of God. This attitude of vigilance was also the fundamentally characteristic spiritual attitude of the Stoic philosophers. One could cite numerous passages from the writings of Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius as well as the Platonist Porphyry, on the subject of the need to keep in mind the thought of death (as a moral incentive) and of living in the presence of God.³⁷ Athanasius concludes his work with the same thought. Shortly before his death, Antony exhorts his disciples: «Live as if you were about to die each day, keep watch over yourselves and remember the instructions which you have heard from me».³⁸

An examination of Antony's letters, which even until very recently have not been given the attention they deserve, confirms that this was the teaching of the historical Antony and not merely an ideal attributed by his biographer.³⁹ Among the most notable characteristics of these letters is the repetition of the counsel «know yourself».⁴⁰ This ancient Greek aphorism, originally attributed to the Delphic oracle, was already understood as equivalent to the philosophical and Biblical notion of *prosoche* in the writings of Philo.⁴¹ Among the Christian writers both before and after Antony who were to make use of this theme, is

36 For Philo it is a spiritual exercise, a part of askesis: *Her.* 253: πάντα γὰρ τὰ τῆς ἀσκήσεως ἐδωδῖμα καθέστηκεν, ἡ ζήτησις, ἡ σκέψις, ἡ ἀνάγνωσις, ἡ ἀκρόασις, ἡ προσοχή, ἡ ἐγκράτεια, ἡ ἐξαδιαφύρησις τῶν ἀδιαφύρων.

37 For a discussion of the similarities between the philosophical and monastic literature on these points and numerous references to the philosophical literature, see P. HADOT, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*, Paris ²1987, 59-74.

38 *Vita Ant.* 91: Καὶ ὥς καθ' ἡμέραν ἀποθνῆσκοντες ζήσατε, προσέχοντες ἑαυτοῖς καὶ μνημονεύοντες ὧν ἠκούσατε παρ' ἐμοῦ παραινέσεων.

39 The most recent and thorough study of the letters is to be found in S. RUBENSON, *The Letters of St. Antony. Origenist Theology, Monastic Tradition and the Making of a Saint* (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity), Minneapolis 1995. The critical edition of the Georgian version with a Latin translation may be found in G. GARITTE, *Lettres de Saint Antoine. Version géorgienne et fragments coptes* (CSCO 148 - 149), Louvain 1955.

40 The injunction is found in Letters 2, 4, 5, 6, 7.

41 See *Migr.* 8.2.

Origen, who in his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, distinguishes two types of knowing oneself.⁴² The first, on the ethical-moral plane, comes about when a person recognizes his or her own failings and the need for improvement. The second has rather to do with the realization of our true spiritual nature and of our position in the universe as created beings.⁴³ Both aspects are found also in the letters of Antony.⁴⁴

2.1.2 *Askesis*

The second technical term introduced by Athanasius to describe Antony's practice as a monk is *askesis* (ἄσκησις). This word, the corresponding verb to which is ἀσκεῖν, is difficult to translate adequately because its common usage in modern everyday European languages carries a negative meaning. Generally it is used to signify not doing something, and indicates abnegation and physical austerity.⁴⁵ In the context of early monasticism, a translation as «spiritual exercise» would be preferable, not in order to deny its aspect of abnegation or of physical austerity, but in order to emphasize its spiritual or intellectual aspect. The original meaning in the monastic context may best be illustrated by examining the underlying metaphor of the monk as athlete. In the *Contra Celsum* Origen tried to refute the view, held by the pagan author Celsus, that people are incapable of progress, by comparing the moral situation to that of an athlete. Just as person is capable of training to become a good tightrope-walker through attention and practice, so also in the ethical-moral sphere virtue may be acquired through

42 The most extensive treatment of the subject is to be found in P. COURCELLE, *Connais-toi toi-même 1-3* (Études Augustiniennes), Paris 1974-1975.

43 See Origen, *ComCt* II,1,8.

44 On the theme in Antony's letters, see also G. COUILLEAU, «La liberté d'Antoine», in *Commandements du Seigneur et libération évangélique* (SA 70), Roma 1977, 17.

45 As an example, the *Oxford English Dictionary* s.v. ascetic: the exercise of extremely rigorous self-discipline; severely abstinent, austere. Modern historical writers often use the word in this negative modern sense, which often has little to do with the use of the Greek word in antiquity. For example Heussi: «Verstehen wir unter Askese jede religiös begründete Enthaltung oder Einschränkung von Speise und Trank, Wohnung und Schlaf, Kleidung und jeglichem Besitz, vornehmlich die Enthaltbarkeit im engsten Sinn, den zeitweiligen oder völligen Verzicht auf den Geschlechtsverkehr...», K. HEUSSI, *Der Ursprung des Mönchtums*, Tübingen 1936, 13. This definition is adopted also by P. NAGEL, *Die Motivierung der Askese in der alten Kirche und der Ursprung des Mönchtums* (TU 95), Berlin 1966, 1. In fact this meaning corresponds more to the content of the Greek ἀποταγή/, ἀπόταξις, ἀποτάσσω (renounce) than to the Greek notion of ἄσκησις.

prolonged attention and practice.⁴⁶ Origen signified attention and practice by *prosoche* and *askesis*. *Askesis* in its original meaning signifies the training program of an athlete. On the spiritual plane it signifies the training program, the spiritual exercises, of the spiritual athlete. The image of an athlete becomes a commonplace to describe the monk and it included the notion of *askesis*. For Athanasius, *askesis* signifies the search for moral perfection or virtue by means of various exercises, in order to offer service to God (or in order to be pleasing to God).⁴⁷ At the beginning of the Prologue to the *Vita Antonii*, Athanasius uses the term to indicate the practice of virtue and later declares that the Lord had protected Antony from being martyred in order to make of him a teacher of the ascetic life, which he had learned from the Scriptures.⁴⁸ At the same time, Athanasius also says that as a young man Antony had sought to learn as much as he could about the practice of virtue and spiritual exercise, that is, about *askesis*, from old men who practiced the ascetic life. Among the qualities and practices mentioned we find amiability, diligent attention in prayer, gentleness, devotion to Christ and mutual love.⁴⁹ According to Athanasius, Antony strove to realize in himself the virtues of all as part of his asceticism.

46 See ORIGEN, *CCels* 3.69: Εἰ δὲ καὶ τισὶ πάντῳ χαλεπὸν ἐστὶ τὸ μεταβάλλειν, τὴν αἰτίαν λεκτέον εἶναι περὶ τὴν συγκατάθεσιν αὐτῶν, ὁκνοῦσαν παραδέξασθαι τὸν ἐπὶ πᾶσι θεὸν εἶναι ἐκάστῳ δίκαιον κριτὴν περὶ πάντων τῶν ἐν τῷ βίῳ πεπραγμένων. Μέγα γὰρ δύναται καὶ πρὸς τὰ δοκοῦντα εἶναι χαλεπώτατα καὶ, ἵνα καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ὀνομάσω, ἐγγὺς ποὺ ἀδύνατα προαίρεσις καὶ ἄσκησις. Ἡ βουλευθεῖσα ἀνθρωπίνῃ φύσει ἐπὶ κάλου βαίνειν, τεταμένῃ διὰ μέσου τοῦ θεάτρου ἐν μετέωρῳ, καὶ μετὰ τοῦ φέρειν τοσαῦτα καὶ τηλικαῦτα βάρη δεδύνηται τῇ ἄσκήσει καὶ τῇ προσοχῇ τὸ τοιοῦτο ποιῆσαι· βουλευθεῖσα δὲ κατ' ἀρετὴν βιώσαι ἀδυνάτως ἔχει, κἂν ἢ πρότερον φαυλοτάτῃ γεγεννημένη; Ἀλλ' ὅρα μὴ ποτε ὁ τὰ τοιαῦτα λέγων τῇ δημιουργῷ τοῦ λογικοῦ ζῴου φύσει ἐγκαλεῖ μᾶλλον ἢ τῷ γεγεννημένῳ, εἰ πρὸς μὲν τὰ οὕτω χαλεπὰ οὐδαμῶς ὄντα χρήσιμα πεποίηκε δυνατὴν τὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου φύσιν, ἀδύνατον δὲ πρὸς τὴν ἰδίαν μακαριότητα. Ἀλλὰ γὰρ ἀρκεῖ καὶ ταῦτα πρὸς τὸ φύσιν γὰρ ἀμεῖψαι τελέως παγγάλεπον.

47 See L.T.A. LORIE, *Spiritual Terminology in the Latin Translations of the Vita Antonii with reference to fourth and fifth century monastic literature*, Utrecht 1955, 65-69. On the history and usage of the word, see also: J. GRIBOMONT, «Askese. IV. Neues Testament und Alte Kirche», in *Theologische Realenzyklopedie* 4, Berlin 1979, 204-225 and J. DE GUIBERT and M. OLPHE-GAILLARD, «Ascèse, Ascétisme», in *Dictionnaire de la Spiritualité* 1, Paris 1937, 936-977. Couilleau («La liberté d'Antoine», 29, n.52) notes that the word enters Christian literature in force with the *Vita Antonii*. Athanasius uses it 38 times.

48 *Vit. Ant.* 46: ὁ δὲ Κύριος ἦν αὐτὸν φυλάττων εἰς τὴν ἡμῶν καὶ τὴν ἐτέρων ὠφέλειαν, ἵνα καὶ ἐν τῇ ἄσκήσει, ἣν αὐτὸς ἐκ τῶν γραφῶν μεμάθηκεν, πολλοῖς διδάσκαλος γένηται.

49 *Vit. Ant.* 3-4.

Antony also practiced physical asceticism: fasting, abstinence from meat and wine, night vigils, and sleeping on the bare earth.⁵⁰ However, this physical asceticism was practiced in the interests of the spirit and not because austerity and abnegation were ends in themselves, nor because the body was considered to be in itself bad. The aim of physical austerity was to strengthen the spirit. Athanasius relates that Antony used to say «the spirit is strong when the pleasures of the body become weaker».⁵¹

By describing the beginning of Antony's monastic life in these terms, Athanasius was proposing an ideal that placed the development of the interior life at the heart of the monastic enterprise. Whatever may have been the ideas of the historical Antony, Athanasius' description assured that he would become a model for the interior life.

Athanasius also found another role for monks by beginning to ordain them bishops, a practice that was destined to have far-reaching consequences for the Egyptian Church. Already by 339, Athanasius had begun to confirm the choice of monks by local communities as their bishop.⁵² Only fifteen years after Pachomius had established himself in Tabennesi, we find one of his monks, Philon, as bishop of Thebes, six miles to the south. Another, Mouis, replaces Ammonius as bishop of Latopolis further to the south. Mouis is cited by Athanasius along with six other monks, who had become bishops, in 354 in order to convince the monk of Nitria, Drakontius, to accept the bishopric of Hermopolis Parva. Among these six was Serapion of Thmuis, a disciple of Antony and bishop since 337. As time went on, the practice became more common. In his Festal Letter of 368, Athanasius observes that the eleven new bishops that year were «all ascetics leading the monastic life».⁵³

The insistence of the Canons of Athanasius on the style of life of a bishop shows the desire to recruit irreproachable men for the post. It was not only chastity, but the whole range of moral qualities for which the ascetic life prepared one, that led to the choice of monks as bishops. It was above all because of their cultivation of knowledge of the Scriptures that the choice of monks as bishops appeared attractive to Athanasius. The monastic culture was essentially a Scrip-

50 *Vit. Ant.* 7,6-8.

51 *Vit. Ant.* 7,9. The English translations of the Life of Antony are from: ATHANASIUS, *The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, tr. R.C. Gregg (Classics of Western Spirituality), New York 1980.

52 MARTIN, *Athanase d'Alexandrie*, 680.

53 MARTIN, *Athanase d'Alexandrie*, 682.

tural one, in which the biblical texts were read, memorized, recited and interpreted. This is true both of the eremitical and of the cenobitic circles, as I have documented elsewhere.⁵⁴

Athanasius portrays Antony as assiduously cultivating the interior life. He knows the Scriptures by heart. He is perfectly orthodox, refusing to have anything to do with Meletians, Manichaeans, and Arians.⁵⁵ He even went to Alexandria and preached eloquently against the Arians.⁵⁶ Athanasius comments: «When they heard the heresy that contends against Christ condemned by such a man, all the people rejoiced. And all in the city ran together to see Antony».⁵⁷ Not only did his knowledge of the Scriptures allow him to combat heresy, but he was also capable on entering into dialogue with the non-Christian philosophers, as Athanasius recounts at length.⁵⁸ He could even dispute the allegorical interpretation of the pagan myths.⁵⁹

What more could one ask for in a bishop? Thus Athanasius' portrait of Antony contributed significantly to a process already underway, the monastification of the episcopacy of the Egyptian Church, a process that continued so that later in the fifth century only monks would be considered for this office.⁶⁰

From what has been said thus far, it is clear that Athanasius played a major role through his practice, his personal contacts, and his writings in determining the major role that monasticism would play in the life of the Egyptian Church. It is a measure of his success that in the Bohairic Life of Pachomius, Theodore recounts that he heard Pachomius say the following: «In Egypt now in our generation, I see three principal things flourishing with the favor of God and man. The first is the blessed athlete, the holy Apa Athanasius, the archbishop of Alexandria who struggles for the faith even to the point of death. The second is our holy father Antony, who is the perfect model of the anchoritic life. The third is this *Koinonia*, which is the pattern for everyone who wants to gather souls

54 M. SHERIDAN, «The Spiritual and Intellectual World of Early Egyptian Monasticism» in this volume, 47-87. See also: MARTIN, *Athanase d'Alexandrie*, 690-699.

55 *Vit. Ant.* 68.

56 *Vit. Ant.* 69.

57 *Vit. Ant.* 70.

58 *Vit. Ant.* 72-80.

59 *Vit. Ant.* 76.

60 There is a major difference between limiting the field of choice for the episcopacy to monks and trying to impose celibacy on a non-monastic clergy, such as occurred later in the western Church.

together according to God to help them achieve perfection». ⁶¹ Thus, by the end of the fourth century, Athanasius and monasticism were inseparably joined in the memory of the Egyptian Church. ⁶² Monasticism has continued to play a major role in the life of the Egyptian Church, even, in the eyes of some historians, assuring its survival in the period that followed the Arab conquest of Egypt. But that is another story for another time.

61 A. VEILLEUX, *Pachomian Koinonia I*, Kalamazoo, Mich. 1982, 192.

62 On the integration of monasticism within the Egyptian Church, one should now consult: M. GIORDA, *Monachesimo e istituzioni ecclesiastiche in Egitto. Alcuni casi di interazione e integrazione*, Bologna 2010 and *eadem*, *Il Regno di Dio in Terra. Le Fondazioni monastiche Egiziane tra V e VII secolo*, Roma 2011.

THE ENCOMIUM IN THE COPTIC LITERATURE OF THE LATE SIXTH CENTURY¹

Among extant Coptic sermons, a significant number are designated as «encomia». Some of these, but by no means all, show the characteristics of the encomium as developed in the Greek patristic literature of the fourth and fifth centuries. In order to distinguish among the various types of sermons that bear this label, it will be necessary first to situate the encomium in the context of classical rhetoric.² It may be useful to recall that in antiquity there never developed specifically Christian schools of grammar or rhetoric; the famous Christian preachers/orators of the fourth and fifth century learned their art in the traditional schools. The tradition of rhetorical education in Greco-Roman Egypt has recently been studied in some detail.³

1. LOCATING THE ENCOMIUM WITHIN CLASSICAL RHETORIC

At least from the time of Aristotle rhetoric was regarded as having three divisions: 1. deliberative or political, 2. forensic or legal, 3. epideictic or ceremonial. These divisions, reflecting the life of fifth and fourth century Athens above all, corresponded to the kinds of oratory practiced in the public assemblies, the law courts and on ceremonial occasions such as public festivals and funerals.⁴ Aris-

1 This essay appeared first in *Christianity in Egypt: Literary Production and Intellectual Trends. Studies in Honor of Tito Orlandi* (SEAug 125), ed. P. Buzi - A. Camplani, Roma 2011, 443-464. It is a pleasure and a privilege to be able to offer this contribution to honor the outstanding contributions and the indefatigable labors of Tito Orlandi on behalf of Coptic studies over many decades. As the notes will show, this article owes much to his work.

2 The present essay presupposes and builds on observations made in a previous article: *Rhetorical Structure in Coptic Sermons*, in *The World of Early Egyptian Christianity. Language Literature and Social Context. Essays in Honor of David W. Johnson*, ed. J.D. Goehring - J.A. Timbie, Washington, D.C. 2007, 25-48.

3 See R. CRIBIORE, *Writings, teachers, and students in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (American Studies in Papyrology 36), Atlanta 1996, and *eadem*, *Gymnastics of the Mind. Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt*, Princeton/Oxford 2001.

4 See G.A. KENNEDY, *Classical Rhetoric and its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*, 2d. ed., Chapel Hill, NC 1999, 7 and *idem*, *A New History of Clas-*

totle saw these three types of rhetoric as referring to three different types of time and noted that the ceremonial orator is «properly concerned with the present, since all men praise or blame in view of the state of things existing at the time, though they often find it useful also to recall the past and to make guesses at the future». The three kinds of rhetoric also have three distinct ends in view and that of epideictic, according to Aristotle, is: «Those who praise or attack a man aim at proving him worthy of honor or the reverse, and they too treat all other considerations with reference to this one».⁵ Subjects of epideictic rhetoric could be gods, men, cities or things and speakers often drew on the Homeric poems that formed the basis of all Greek education for their subjects. Although the *encomium* is found earlier in the tradition of Greek poetry, by the fifth century it had become a form of prose rhetoric. Thus Gorgias (480-375 BC) was famous for his *Encomium of Helen* as was Isocrates on the same subject.⁶ With the *Panegyricus* of Isocrates we begin to have prose pieces that were written without being delivered.⁷ Later in the period known as the Second Sophistic, panegyric, technically a speech at a festival, came to be regarded as a subdivision of epideictic. Other genres in this division would have been a *gamelion*, a speech at a marriage, and an *epitaphios*, a speech at a funeral.⁸ In the treatises on epideictic rhetoric attributed to Menander Rhetor, widely diffused in the Byzantine empire, the classification of epideictic becomes more complex and acquires many more subdivisions corresponding to all the occasions that called for such oratory.⁹

The *encomium*, however, was not only included under epideictic rhetoric, but came to be incorporated in the *progymnasmata*, the school exercises prac-

sical Rhetoric, Princeton, N.J. 1994, 61-62; S. MATUSCHEK, *Epideiktische Beredsamkeit* in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, ed. G. Ueding, Darmstadt 1994, 2:1258-1267; T.C. BURGESS, *Epideictic Literature* (Studies in Classical Philology 3), Chicago 1902. These divisions were repeated five centuries later by Menander Rhetor. See D.A. RUSSELL - N.G. WILSON, *Menander Rhetor*, Oxford 1981, 2-5.

5 ARISTOTLE, *Rhetorica*, I, 3. Tr.: R. McKEON, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, New York 1941.

6 KENNEDY, *Classical Rhetoric*, 34-38.

7 KENNEDY, *Classical Rhetoric*, 38-45.

8 KENNEDY, *Classical Rhetoric*, 49.

9 See D.A. RUSSELL - N.G. WILSON, *Menander Rhetor*. These include in addition to praise of a land and of a city, the imperial speech, a speech of arrival, a speech of departure, a funeral oration, etc. The word *encomion* is used in reference to many of these and is virtually equivalent to praise. Cf. p. 227.

ticed by students of rhetoric.¹⁰ As such, it came to be regarded not just as a complete form of epideictic rhetoric, but as a part, a building block, so to speak, that could be used in other forms of rhetoric as well. This is explained quite clearly by Nicholas the Sophist, a fifth century AD teacher of rhetoric at Constantinople: «some *progymnasmata* are parts, some parts and wholes». He goes on to explain that *encomium* «belongs with those that are parts and wholes. We are treating it as a whole whenever we use it to speak well of someone, and as a part whenever in the course of deliberative speaking we praise something or other that we are urging be done...». Nicholas classifies Isocrates' *Panegyricus* as belonging to the deliberative species of rhetoric, but «constructed of encomiastic material». According to Nicholas, «the end of encomion is the honorable (*to kalon*), as justice is the end of the judicial and the advantageous of deliberative speech».¹¹ We are now over seven centuries from the original division of rhetoric by Aristotle into these three parts. Already for many centuries students had practiced the *progymnasmata*, the parts or exercises, and *encomium* was one of these. Among others, these included: fable, narrative, anecdote, maxim, refutation, confirmation, invective and comparison. One of the earliest extant manuals, that of Aelius Theon from the first century AD, describes the subject matter of *encomium* as «language revealing the greatness of virtuous actions and other good qualities belonging to a particular person». Although he states that the term is now applied to praise of living persons, whereas praise of the dead is called an *epitaphios*, the fact is that the famous encomia of Helen by Gorgias and Isocrates were of a dead person. The *epitaphios* was properly a funeral oration.¹² Theon explains that good things are praised especially and «some good things relate to the mind and character, others to the body, and some are external to us». From these three classes of things, he says, we can get an abundance of subjects for an *encomium*. Among the things that can be praised he suggests, «first, good birth, and that is twofold, either from the goodness of (a man's) city and tribe and constitution, or from ancestors and other relatives. Then there is education, friendship, reputation, official position, wealth, good children, a good death. Goods of the body are health, strength, beauty, and acuteness of sense». The goods of the mind and the actions resulting from them offer other possibilities, «for example, that a person is prudent, temperate, courageous, just, pious,

10 See G.A. KENNEDY, *Progymnasmata. Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*, tr. G.A. Kennedy, Atlanta 2003.

11 KENNEDY, *Progymnasmata*, 155.

12 KENNEDY, *Progymnasmata*, 50, n. 154.

generous, magnanimous, and the like». Fine actions are those «done for others, rather than ourselves and done for the sake of the honorable, not the expedient or the pleasant». Theon also suggests that there is a proper order for the subjects of praise: after the *proœmion*, one should speak of good birth and other external goods, «in each case showing that the subject used the advantage prudently». He notes that «goods that result from chance rather than moral choice are the least source of praise». If the person lacks such goods, one can always say that «he was not brought low by his misfortunes nor unjust in poverty nor servile when in want». Then actions and successes should be taken up, arranged under the virtues.¹³ The later treatise on the *progymnasmata* attributed to Hermogenes mentions additional items that can be included in praise such as «marvelous occurrences at birth, for example from dreams of signs or things like that». Most important, he says, are deeds and finally the manner of death. This treatise also notes: «The best source of argument in encomia is derived from comparisons, which you will utilize as the occasion may suggest».¹⁴ This is, in fact, a reference to another of the *progymnasmata*, *synkrisis* or comparison, which is treated by all the manuals as a distinct exercise.

2. LOCATING THE ENCOMIUM WITHIN CHRISTIAN RHETORIC

Christian preaching in the early Church has been divided into «missionary sermon, prophetic preaching, the homily and the panegyric sermon».¹⁵ The first true example of Christian epideictic oratory, according to Kennedy, is the farewell discourse of Gregory Thaumaturgus, delivered about 238 when he was departing from Origen's school at Caesarea, but it is not a sermon, that is, an example of preaching.¹⁶ For extant examples of that one must wait for Eusebius, who included in his *Ecclesiastical History* a panegyric he had delivered himself on the occasion of the dedication of the new church in Tyre in 326 or 327. He calls it a «panegyric» (πανηγυρικός) and says that many other bishops present also delivered panegyrics.¹⁷ Eusebius employs the traditional forms drawn from the *progymnasmata* such as *ecphrasis* (description) and *synkrisis* (comparison).

13 KENNEDY, *Progymnasmata*, 51-52.

14 KENNEDY, *Progymnasmata*, 82.

15 KENNEDY, *Classical Rhetoric*, 155.

16 KENNEDY, *Classical Rhetoric*, 160-161.

17 EUSEBIUS, *Hist. eccl.* X, 3. KENNEDY, *Classical Rhetoric*, 162-163.

Eusebius also delivered a panegyric in 336 for Constantine's thirtieth jubilee, which has been preserved.

It was in the second half of the fourth century, however, that Christian panegyric came into full flower in the sermons of the Cappadocian fathers, Basil the Great, Gregory Nazianzen, and Gregory of Nyssa. Basil and Gregory Nazianzen had studied rhetoric in Athens with some of the best known rhetors of the period, Himerius and Prohaeresius. Forty-four orations of Gregory Nazianzen are extant and eight of these are encomia, which show strong influence of the sophists of the period.¹⁸ Of particular interest from the point of view of later Coptic encomia are the ones on Athanasius and Basil, both of which were translated into Sahidic Coptic.¹⁹

3. THE STYLE OF CHRISTIAN PANEGYRIC

An important distinction has been made between the style that was considered appropriate for a panegyric sermon and that appropriate for a homily. F. Siegert has noted that in the ancient world only Jewish, as it took place in the synagogues, and Christian religious celebrations required rhetorical activity.²⁰ As he notes, «Ancient religious celebrations normally kept worship separate from teaching». But that did not exclude the possibility of religious panegyric or speeches on religious matters before a public assembly or on the occasion of a festival. As already noted, the gods could be the subject of an encomium. This required the participation of professional speakers. There was also religious discourse on a colloquial level suited for the classroom or private gatherings, such as that developed by some philosophers. These two styles or categories found their Jewish and Christian counterparts in the panegyric sermon and the homily, both of which also corresponded to different occasions and audiences. Normally the style appropriate to the panegyric sermon was not seen as fitting for a homily, that is, an explanation of texts that had been read in the assembly, Jewish or Christian. The Christian text based homily had reached its first flowering in the homilies of Origen of Alexandria and was to know a second in the homilies of John Chrysostom. Siegert defines a homily as an address to an audience with

18 KENNEDY, *Classical Rhetoric*, 163-165.

19 See T. ORLANDI, «La traduzione copta dell'Encomio di Atanasio di Gregorio Nazianzeno», *Le Muséon* 83 (1970) 351-366.

20 F. SIEGERT, «Homily and Panegyric Sermon», in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period 330 B.C. - A.D. 400*, ed. S.E. Porter, Leiden 1997, 421.

which the speaker is familiar.²¹ It is characterized by a conversational, colloquial style. That is certainly true of the homilies of Origen and Chrysostom.

Conversely the colloquial style was not seen as fitting for more formal occasions and social settings. These required the grand or high style that had been developed in the Greek discourse (*logos*). Public communication required high artistic skills to which a sophisticated urban public might well be accustomed. Thus the style suitable for an explanation of the readings was not sufficient for the celebration of an important feast or the annual commemoration of a saint or martyr. These required a grander style. It should be noted that the grand style did not necessarily mean the «Asianic» style, though this might be employed and some Coptic encomia or panegyric sermons show its influence.

4. COPTIC ENCOMIA

We have chosen to concentrate here on a few authors from the late sixth century and/or early seventh, that is, from the time of the Patriarch Damian, because they are known to us by name, and can be situated more or less historically. They also show a clear acquaintance with the grand style.

4.1 John of Shmun (Hermopolis – Ashmunein)

The first of these is John of Shmun (called the «recluse») from whom we have two encomia, one on Antony published by Garitte in 1943²² and a fragmentary one on Mark the Evangelist published by Orlandi in 1968.²³ The encomium of Antony also contains a passage praising the patriarch Damian (578-604), who is mentioned as living, thus allowing the author to be situated toward the end of the sixth century. John is identified as bishop of Shmun in the superscription, which also says that he preached the encomium while he was still a priest and recluse.

The Encomium of Antony

The encomium begins with a lavish *proœmion* (1-5) in which the author expresses his unworthiness to speak on a subject that has already been covered so well by

21 SIEGERT, «Homily and Panegyric Sermon», 441.

22 G. GARITTE, «Panégyrique de saint Antoine par Jean, l'évêque d'Hermopolis», *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 9 (1943) 100-134; 330-365. An Italian translation may be found in T. ORLANDI, *Omelia copte* (Corona Patrum), Torino 1981, 247-264..

23 T. ORLANDI, *Studi Copti* (Testi e Documenti per lo Studio dell'Antichità 22), Milano 1968.

Athanasius. This is followed by an elaborate section of praise of Antony's native land, Egypt (6-9), and then by praise of his parents (10, 14). Then John mentions his natural good qualities or virtues, which he manifested from the beginning, and describes his spiritual progress and his bodily asceticism. There are numerous allusions to specific passages in the Athanasius' *Life of Antony*, with which the author is clearly very familiar. Abundant use is made of *synkrisis* (comparison) in order to fill out the discourse. Finally, John mentions all those who have praised Antony beginning with Athanasius, then Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, John Chrysostom, Cyrill of Alexandria, Severus of Antioch, Shenoute, and his contemporary, Damian, who is mentioned as having inherited the throne of Athanasius. He concludes with a peroration addressed to the saint invoking his assistance. In short, John of Shmun shows perfect acquaintance with the literary form of the encomium and makes specific reference to Gregory's encomium of Athanasius, noting that Gregory had introduced praise of Antony into his discourse on Athanasius.²⁴

John's use of *synkrisis* is particularly worthy of note. In the intricate *proëmion*, John has already noted that by comparison with Athanasius, who had written the life of Antony, he is much inferior and unworthy. It is of course a commonplace for a writer or orator to declare his unworthiness or incapacity. He had also stated at the beginning of the *proëmion* that he wished to offer a banquet of praise, another commonplace for a *proëmion*. Further on in the *proëmion*, on the basis of these two comparisons, that of the banquet and of his own comparative unworthiness, he skillfully introduces another *synkrisis* (§4):

APHY ΔΕ ΟΝ ΝCΥΝΓΚΑΤΑΒΑΤΙΚΟC ΕΤΤΑΖΜ̄ ΕΤΝ̄ΖΗΤΤΗΥΤ̄Ν
ΝΑΤ̄ΝΤΝΝ̄ΩΔΞΕ ΕΖΕΝΚΟΥΙ ΝΒΝΝΕ ΕΥΩΟΥΩΟΥ Η ΖΝΚΑΡΟΙΑ
(fol.73va) ΜΝΖΕΝΕΡΕΒΙΝΘΟC ΔΥΩ ΖΝΚΕΕΙΔΟC ΝΤΕΙΜΙΝΕ ΝΑΙ
ΕΩΔΥΝ̄ΤΟΥ ΕΧΝΤΕΤΡΑΠΕΖΑ ΝΖΑΕ, ΕΥΘΟΧΒ ΜΕΝ ΜΜΑΤΕ ΕΖΟΥΕ
ΕΝΘΙΝΟΥΩΜ ΕΤΜΜΑΥ ΕΤΕΝΑΩΕ ΟΥΝ̄ΤΟΥ Ν̄ΤΑΥΩΡΠΚΑΑΥ ΕΖ-
ΡΑΙ· ΖΟΜΟC ΔΕ ΕΥΩΟΟΠ̄ ΝCΟΛCΛ̄ ΝΝΕΤΝΗΞ·

Perhaps also the condescending guests among you will compare our words to little dry dates or to nuts and chick peas and other things of this sort, which are brought to the table at the end, much more humble indeed than those very expensive dishes already served, yet pleasing to the diners just the same.

Later in the sermon John introduces an extended comparison between Antony and the heavenly powers (§20ff.). He begins by exclaiming that his mind is

24 GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oration 21 (In laudem Athanasii 5)*; PG 35, 1085-1088.

unable to find an example with which to compare Antony (Ὁ ΧΕ ΜΠΑΝΟΥΣ ΟΜΠΑΡΑΔΙΓΜΑ ΑΝ ΕΙΝΑΤΝΤΩΝ ΑΝΤΩΝΙΟΣ ΕΡΟΨ). If he is compared to visible things, he will be found to be superior to all of them. Then he notes that the wise (ΝΟΦΟΟΣ) say that man is a little world (ΟΥΚΟΥΙΊ ΝΚΟСМОС) because the energy of all those things in the whole world are found in him. Since each of the others are similar to the whole world, he concludes that we must rise in our mind to heaven, the place of Antony's true citizenship (ΠΟΛΙΤΕΥΜΑ), an allusion to Phil 3:20. Then he asks who dwells there. The answer is found in other Pauline texts, Eph 1:21 and Col 1:16: angels, archangels, principalities, powers, thrones, dominations and virtues. To these must be added the cherubim and the seraphim, which are more important and nearer to God. He then compares Antony to each of these beginning with the lowest grade (angels) and Antony is found to fit the description of each because of his behavior if not by his nature (§22).²⁵ This is done through a skillful use of the principle of interpreting the Scriptures by means of the Scriptures allowing John to find the correct description for each of the heavenly ranks. Space permits us to cite only the last two of these comparisons:

ΧΑΙΡΟΥΒΙΝ ΕΨΑΥΖΕΡΜΗΝΕΥΕ ΜΜΟС ΧΕ ΠСООΥΝ ΕΤΟΨ ΑΥΩ
СΕΡΑΦΙΝ ΕΨΑΥΟΥΑΖΜΕΨ ΧΕΠΡΩΖΚ ΜПКΩΖΤ̄.

ΑΥΩ ΧΕΜΠΕΠСООΥΝ ΝΝΑΝΤΩΝΙΟС ΑΨΑΙ, ΑΥΩ ΠΑΝΙМ
ΖΝΝΡΩΜΕ ΠΕΝΤΑΨΑΨΑΙ ΕΖΟΥΕ ΕΡΟΨ, ΑΥΩ ΝΙМ ΠΕΝΤΑΨΠΡΩΚΖ
МПКΩΖТ̄ ΕΤΟΥΨΨΕ ΕΤΕΠΝΟΥΤΕΠΕ ΝΤΕΨΖΕ, ΕΑΨΜΟΥΖ ΕΒΟΛ
ΝΖΗТ̄ ΝΘΕ ΝΖΕΝΧΒВС̄ ΚΑΤΑΠΕΤСНΖ ΧΕΑΖΕΝΧВВС̄ ΧΕΡΟ ΕΒΟΛ
ММОΨ ΑΥΩ ΧΕΑΠСООΥΝ МΠΕХС̄ ΡΟΥΘΕΙΝ ΝΖΗТ̄,

Cherubim is interpreted «abundant knowledge» and seraphim «the flame of the fire».

And was not the knowledge of Antony abundant and that of what man was more abundant than his? And who is it who was more on fire with the fire that consumes, that is, God, so that filled with it like burning coals, as it is written «coals were ignited by him» (Ps 17:8 LXX), and the knowledge of Christ shone forth in him? (§27)²⁶

25 There is an allusion here to the Stoic principle that the nature of a thing is to be found in its etymology, based on the idea that the names correspond to the reality and are not pure convention.

26 Although the etymology for cherubim goes back to Philo, both etymologies can be found in Ps. DIONYSIUS, *De caelesti hierarchia* VII,1 (PG 3, 205B), a possible source for John.

After additional development of the comparison achieved through playing with the idea of the wings and the eyes of these heavenly beings, John concludes that, like the Cherubim, Antony participated in the contemplation of the divinity in the manner of an incorporeal being (§29). He is aware that these comparisons may seem extravagant or provoke scandal («Perhaps you are murmuring...»). His answer to the imaginary objection is to go even further: «but it is to God that I compare him». This is done again through the use of the principle of interpreting the Scriptures by means of the Scriptures, invoking successively: 1 Cor 11:1 «Be imitators of me as I am of Christ», Eph 5:1 «Imitate God like beloved sons», Ps 86:1 «I have said that you are gods, that you are all sons of the Most High», and Matt 5:48 because he (Antony) «was perfect like his Father in the heavens who is perfect». This is followed by numerous other allusions to Scriptural, especially Old Testament texts, to illustrate the perfection of Antony (§30).

Thus it can be seen that a significant portion of the material for the encomium is obtained through comparisons (*synkriseis*), as Hermogenes had recommended, which are then developed and amplified through the use of Scriptural texts using the techniques of etymology and following the principle of interpreting the Scriptures through the Scriptures.²⁷

The Encomium of Mark

The second encomium, on Mark the Evangelist, attributed to John of Shmun (the Recluse) shows similar characteristics. The *proœmium*, though fragmentary, is clearly in the «high» style fitting for the feast of the one who initiated the «preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Egypt». There follows an elaborate play on the theme of darkness and light taking its point of departure the Coptic name for Egypt, **KHME**, which of course also means black. Before the arrival of Mark, Egypt was in darkness, as it is written «The people that walked in darkness and the shadows, the light has shone has shown on them» (Isa 9:1 inexact or paraphrase). This was not the natural light of the sun, but the light that illuminates every man coming into the world (John 1:9), which is the sun of intelligible things. Mark did not shine of his own light, but reflected the light

27 This principle had been developed extensively by Origen, who had found it stated in 1 Cor 2:13 «comparing spiritual things to spiritual». The passages in which Origen appeals to this text are numerous. Among them may be mentioned *HomGn* 2,6; 6,3; 7,4; *HomEx* 1,2; *HomNum* 16,9; *HomEz* 1,2;1,4; 6,4; *ComCt* 3; *ComJn* 13,361; *CCels* 4,71; 7,11.

of God as the moon reflects the sun. Before Mark removed the idols the day was absent from Egypt and there was everlasting night, but when Mark, the light, arrived, the day began.²⁸ Fragmentary as the text is, it clearly reflects the same style and techniques involving the use of Scriptural texts already seen in the previous homily.

Of particular interest is the author's use of *synkrisis* in order to explain the embarrassing text of Acts 15:37-41 regarding Mark, which he feels constrained to confront. The problem was not only that the founder of the Church of Alexandria should be seen to be cast in a bad light by the Apostle to the Gentiles, but that the strife might appear to cast in doubt the efficacy of the activity of the Spirit:

ΠΕΧΑΚ ΔΕ ΧΕ
 ΜΗ ΜΠΕΠΝΕΥΜΑ ΝΟΥΩΤ ΑΝ ΠΕΤΝΖΗΤΟΥ ΜΠΕCΝΑΥ
 ΕΤΒΕΟΥ ΟΕ ΜΠΕCΧΠΙΟ ΜΠΕΤΩΑΧΕ ΝΖΗΤΟΥ ΚΑΚΩC
 ΚΑΙ ΓΑΡ ΟΥΑ ΜΕΝ ΕCΕΙΝΕ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΝΟΥΔΙΟΡΘΩCΙC ΜΝΟΥΜΕΤΑ-
 ΝΟΙΑ
 ΠΚΕΟΥΑ ΔΕ ΝΟΥΜΝΤΡΕCΝΗΦΕ ΜΝΟΥΖΑΡΕΖ·
 †CΟΟΥΝ ΓΑΡ ΧΕ ΑΤΜΕΤΑΝΟΙΑ ΕΙΝΕ ΝΟΥΜΗΗΩΕ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕΠ-
 ΟΥΧΑΙ·
 †CΟΟΥΝ ΓΑΡ ΧΕ ΑΤΛΟΙΘΕ ΝΤΜΕΤΑΝΟΙΑ ΤΡΕΟΥΜΗΗΩΕ ΒΩΚ
 ΕΠΤΑΚΟ·
 ΑΥΩ ΜΗΗΩΕ ΓΑΡ ΝΡΕCΚΑΤΟΡΘΟΥ ΟΝΟΝ ΑΥΩ ΑΥΧΟΟΥ ΖΜ-
 ΠΕΥΖΗΤ ΧΕ
 ΕΦΟCΟΝ ΟΥΝ ΜΕΤΑΝΟΙΑ ΩΟΟΠ, ΝΤΝΡΝΟΒΕ, ΑΥΩ ΤΝΝΑΜΕΤΑ-
 ΝΟΙ ΟΝ
 ΜΠΟΥΕΩΤΑΖΟ ΔΕ ΜΕΤΑΝΟΙ
 ΑΥΩ ΩΑΡΕ ΖΑΖ ΖΝΝΕΤΑΖΕΡΑΤΟΥ ΧΟΟC ΧΕ ΕΙΩΑΝΖΕ †ΝΑΤ-
 ΩΟΥΝ ΟΝ
 ΑΥΖΕ ΜΠΟΥΕΩΤΩΟΥΝ, ΑΥΒΩΚ ΝΝΚΟΛΑCΙC ΩΑ ΕΝΕΖ·

But you will have said:

«Is it not the one spirit that is in both of them?

Why then is he not confuted by those things which he spoke badly in them?»

Because one was proposing correction and penance,

The other temperance and caution.

I know indeed that penance has led many to salvation.

I know, to be sure, that the pretext of penance has made many go to perdition.

28 ORLANDI, *Studi Copti*, 13-17.

For many of the just were weakened and said in their heart,
 «As long as there is penance, let us sin, and then we will do penance again».
 But they were not able to achieve penance.
 Many of those who live rightly say, «If I fall, I will rise again».
 They fell and were not able to rise. They went to eternal punishment.²⁹

The dilemma is resolved by the introduction of another text from Paul and of a comparison to illustrate it:

ΖΩCΤΕ ΠΕΙΝΟΥΤΕ ΝΟΥΩΤ ΠΕΤΝΖΗΤΟΥ ΜΠΕCΝΑΥ,
 40 ΜΕΝ ΝΧΡΗCΤΟC ΖΝΒΑΡΝΑΒΑC, 40 ΔΕ ΝΡΕ4ΩΩΩΤ ΕΒΟΛ
 ΖΜΠΑΥΛΟC·
 ΠΕΧΑ4 ΓΑΡ ΝΤΟ4 ΠΑΥΛΟC ΞΕ
 ΑΝΑΥ ΟΕ ΕΤΜΝΤΧΡΗCΤΟC ΑΥΩ ΤΜΝΤΡΕ4ΩΩΩΤ ΕΒΟΛ ΜΠΝΟΥΤΕ
 ΜΗ ΠΕΙΜΟΟΥ ΝΟΥΩΤ ΑΝ ΠΕΤΒΗΚ ΕΖΡΑΙ ΕΝΕΙΩΗΝ ΤΗΡΟΥ;
 ΑΥΩ ΩΑ4CΤΥΦΕΙ ΜΕΝ ΖΜΠΑΔΑΜΑCΚΙΝΟC, ΩΑ4ΟΝΟΝ ΔΕ ΑΥΩ
 Ν4ΡΝΕΖ ΖΝΤΒΩ ΝΧΟΕΙΤ·
 ΤΝΡΧΡΙΑ ΟΕ ΝΑΥ ΜΕΠCΝΑΥ·
 ΝΤΕΙΖΕ ΔΕ ΟΝ ΠΕΠΝΕΥΜΑ ΝΟΥΩΤ ΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ ΕΤΝΖΗΤΟΥ,
 4CΤΥΦΕΙ ΜΕΝ ΖΜΠΑΥΛΟC, 4ΟΝΟΝ ΔΕ ΟΝ ΖΝΒΑΡΝΑΒΑC

Thus this one God is in both of them.
 He is more compassionate in Barnabas, he is more severe in Paul.
 For Paul himself said: «See the gentleness and severity of God» (Rom 11:22).
 Is it not the same sap that goes through all the branches?
 And nevertheless it is hard in the plum tree, but is soft and becomes oil in the olive tree.
 We then have need of both of them.
 So also is the single holy spirit in them: it is harder in Paul and softer in Barnabas.³⁰

Slightly further on this is reinforced by another comparison in order to insist that the same Spirit was active in Paul and Barnabas, though in different ways and with different effects:

ΜΝΛΑΑΥ ΔΕ ΝΑΑΜΦΙΒΑΛΕ ΞΕ ΝΖΕΝΩΗΝ ΑΝ ΝΡΕ4† ΚΑΡΠΟC
 ΝΕ ΝΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ,
 ΕΥΤCΟ ΜΜΟΟΥ ΖΙΤΜΠΕΠΝΕΥΜΑ ΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ·
 ΖΩCΤΕ ΒΑΡΝΑΒΑC ΟΥCΙΤΕ ΝΚΝΤΗ ΠΕ Ε4ΖΟΛΟC ΤΗΡ4 ΖΙΖΟΥΝ
 ΑΥΩ ΖΙΒΟΛ
 ΠΑΙ ΕΩΑΡΕ ΠΕΤΝΑΥ ΕΡΟ4 ΟΥΩΩ ΕΟΜΚ4 ΚΑΤΑ ΠΕΤCΗΖ·

29 ORLANDI, *Studi Copti*, 32.

30 ORLANDI, *Studi Copti*, 34.

ΦΑΥΛΟΣ ΔΕ ΟΥΖΕΡΜΑΝ ΠΕ ΕΡΕΤΕΚΟΥΚΕ ΜΕΝ ΕΤΖΙΒΟΛ
 ΧΑΧΩ,
 ΕΡΕΟΥΜΗΗΩΕ ΔΕ ΝΚΟΚΚΟΣ ΜΠΕΦΖΟΥΝ, ΕΦΖΟΛΟ ΑΥΩ ΕΦ-
 ΝΟΤΜ ΕΜΑΤΕ·
 ΑΙΝΑΥ ΔΕ ΟΝ ΕΝΕΦΚΕΚΟΥΚΕ ΕΥΣΤΕΦΕΙ ΜΠΡΩΩΕ ΝΖΩΒ
 ΝΑΝΑΓΚΑΙΟΝ ΕΜΑΤΕ ΝΖΗΤΟΥ·

No one will doubt that fruit-bearing trees are holy drawing water from the holy spirit.

Thus Barnabas was a fig sweet inside and outside,
 that which seems good to eat, as it is written (cf. Gen 3:6).

Paul on the other hand was a pomegranate, whose skin on the outside was hard,
 but with much fruit inside sweet and pleasing.

I saw that its skin contained a multitude of necessary things.³¹

Thus through imaginative expansion of the text of Acts 15:37-41 and the introduction of comparisons, the author has found material for his subject and succeeded in neutralizing a potentially embarrassing text that could not be avoided.

The style and techniques used in these two sermons are sufficiently similar to confirm their common authorship. As Garitte already observed, John was well acquainted with the rules of the encomium genre, used the traditional topics and employed comparisons with considerable skill. Yet his homilies, for all they owe to traditional Greek rhetoric, have a very marked Egyptian flavor.³²

4.2 Stephen of Hnēs (Heracleopolis Magna)

Two encomia attributed to Stephen of Hnēs have been preserved, one on the martyr Saint Elias,³³ and the other on Saint Apollo, founder of the Monastery of Isaac.³⁴ Virtually nothing is known of this author. The superscription of the encomium on Apollo states that he preached it while he was still a monk of this

31 ORLANDI, *Studi Copti*, 36.

32 GARITTE, «Panégyrique de saint Antoine par Jean, l'évêque d'Hermopolis», 104-105.

33 G.P.G. SOBHY, *Le martyre de Saint Hélias et l'encomium de l'éveque Stéphanos de Hnēs sur Saint Hélias*, (Bibliothèque d'Études coptes 1), Cairo 1919, 67-94; French translation, 113-120.

34 K.H. KUHN, *A Panegyric on Apollo, Archimandrite of the Monastery of Isaac by Stephen, Bishop of Heracleopolis Magna* (CSCO 394-395, Scriptores Coptici 39-40), Louvain 1978.

monastery, before he became a bishop. On the basis of the historical data contained in the encomium on Apollo, Kuhn concluded to a probable date toward the end of the sixth century. Both of these encomia are written in the high style suitable for a public celebration, in these cases, the annual celebration of the saint.

*The Encomium of Apollo*³⁵

In the classical style *proœmium*, the author, after alluding to his own unworthiness, invokes the traditional image of the banquet to describe what he plans to do: «I shall spread before you a spiritual table of his honourable life». He continues by stating that on this table (the life of our father) «you will find the faith and obedience of the patriarchs towards God, the meekness and lack of vindictiveness of Moses and David, the tranquility of Joshua ... the purity of the great Elijah and his zeal against those who provoke God to jealousy; in sum, the sufferings of the prophets, the renunciation of the apostles, the steadfastness in struggles that are no less than those of the martyrs». He is in effect announcing the source of his material through the use of Scriptural comparisons, for the actual details of the life of Apollo available to him seem to have been rather sparse. After brief allusions to Apollo's childhood and early virtue, he recounts his entrance into the community of Pbow. This is done by invoking a comparison with the patriarch Abraham: «he adopted the example of the patriarch Abraham who came out from his country and his kindred and his father's house into the land flowing with milk and honey» (cf. Exod 3:8 ff.). This refers to the community of Pbow, he explains. The synkrisis follows in the form of antitheses:

ΑΛΛΑ ΠΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΗΣ ΜΕΝ· ΚΑΝ ΕΨΧΕ ΑΥΚΩ ΝΩΥ ΜΠΕΥΚΑΖ
 ΑΛΛΑ ΝΕΡΕΝΕΤΕΝΩΥΝΕ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΨΟΟΠ ΝΜΜΑΥ ΝΘΕ ΕΤΕΡΕΤΕ-
 ΓΡΑΦΗ ΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ ΠΜΝΤΡΕ ΜΠΑΙ·
 ΠΑΙ ΔΕ ΝΤΟΥ ΑΥΤΡΕΤΑΡΕΤΗ ΨΩΠΕ ΝΑΥ ΕΠΜΑ ΝΝΕΤΨΟΟΠ
 ΝΑΥ ΤΗΡΟΥ·
 ΑΑΒΡΑΖΑΜ ΣΩΤΜ̄ ΝΣΑΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΑΥΠΡΟΕΝΗΓΕ ΝΑΥ ΜΠΕΥΜΕΡΙΤ
 ΝΩΗΡΕ ΝΘΥΣΙΑ· ΖΟΟΝ ΠΡΟΤΕΠΡΟΘΕΣΙC ΜΠΕΥΖΗΤ·
 ΑΠΑΙ ΖΩΩΥ ΠΑΡΖΙCΤΑ ΜΜΟΥ ΝΟΥΘΥCΙΑ ΕCΟΝΖ̄ ΕCΟΥΑΑΒ·
 ΕCΕΡΑΝΑΥ ΜΠΝΟΥΤΕ·

35 Kuhn translates the word **ΕΝΓΚΩΜΙΟΝ** in the superscription as «panegyric». All things considered, given the complex history of these terms, it seems to me better to use «encomium».

ΑΑΒΡΑΖΑΜ ΠΩΤ ΖΝΟΥΖΙΗ ΝΨΟΜΝΤ ΝΖΟΟΥ ΨΑΖΡΑΙ ΕΠΤΟΟΥ
 ΝΤΕΦΟΥΣΙΑ·
 ΑΠΑΙ ΖΩΩΨ ΖΥΠΟΜΙΝΕ ΕΠΕΙ{ΑC}ΔΙΑCΤΗΜΑ ΝΤΕΙΘΟΤ· ΣΙΝ-
 ΠΕΙΤΟΥ ΨΑΝΤ- ΕΨΩΤ ΕΖΡΑΙ ΕΠΤΟΟΥ ΜΠΟΗΤΟΝ·

But as for the patriarch, even though he forsook his country, yet all his belongings remained with him, as the holy scripture testifies (Gen 12:5).

This man, on the other hand, let virtue be for him instead of all his belongings.

Abraham was obedient to God and offered up to him as sacrifice his beloved son in accordance with the purpose of his heart (Gen 22).

But this man presented himself a living sacrifice, holy, well-pleasing to God (cf. Rom 12:1).

Abraham walked for three days on the road up to the mountain of sacrifice (cf. Gen 22:4).

But this man endured over so great a distance from this district until he went up to the monastery established on this mountain.

Clearly then Apollo was both similar to and superior to Abraham. There follows the account of his being received into the monastery by the successor of Pachomius, Theodore, and Horsiesius, the description of the significance of the monastic habit and of his progress in virtue, all filled with scriptural allusions. In the midst of this, the orator introduces an apostrophe addressed to the saint:

ΑΛΛΑ ΑΖΡΟΙ ΕΙΕΠ<Ι>ΧΕΙΡΕ ΕΩΠ ΜΠΜΗΗΨΕ ΝΝCΙΟΥ· ΕΙΨΑΧΕ
 ΕΠΕΖΟΥΟ ΝΝΕΚΑΤΟΡΘΩΜΑ ΜΠΕΙΡΩΜΕ ΜΜΑΚΑΡΙΟC ΕΤΜΠΨΑ
 ΝΝΜΠΗΥΕ·
 ΝΙΜ ΓΑΡ Ω ΠΕΝΕΙΩΤ ΠΕΝΤΑΨΑΡΕΖ ΕΤΜΝΤΤΕΛΙΟC ΝΤΕΚΖΕ Ω
 ΠΕΝΕΙΩΤ ΜΠΙΝΕ ΜΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΖΡΑΙ ΝΖΗΤΨ ΑΧΝΤΩΛΜ·
 ΝΙΜ ΝΖΟΥΟ ΕΡΟΚ ΠΕΝΤΑΨΚΑΤΟΡΘΟΥ ΝΤΜΝΤΑΠΑΘΗC ΝΝΑC-
 ΩΜΑΤΟC· ΑΙΤΕΙ ΕΨΜΠCΩΜΑ·
 ΑΨ ΝΡΜΝΚΑΖ ΠΕΝΤΑΚΑΤΑΠΕ† ΝΤΕΦΥCΙC ΝΝΕΤΖΙΠΕCΗΤ·
 ΕΑΨΠΟ ΝΑΨ ΝΤΕΥΓΕΝΙΑ ΝΝΕΤΖΝΝΜΠΗΥΕ· ΨΑΝΤΕΨΨΩΠΕ
 ΖΑΖΤΗΥ ΝΤΕΚΖΕ Ω ΠΕΝΕΙΩΤ·
 Ω ΕΙΝΑΕΨΨΩ ΝΤΜΝΤΝΟΘ ΝΝΑΨ ΝΖΕ ΝΝΤΑΙΟ ΕΤΠΡΕΠΕΙ ΜΠΕΙΡ-
 ΩΜΕ ΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ· ΠΕΙΡΩΜΕ ΖΝΤΕΨΦΥCΙC· ΠΕΙΖΙCΑΑΓΓΕΛΟC
 ΔΕ ΖΝΝΕΨΤΡΟΠΟC· ΠΕΙΡΩΜΕ ΝΡΜΝΚΑΖ ΚΑΤΑΤΕΨΟΥCΙΑ·
 ΝΨΗΡΕ ΔΕ ΝΝΟΥΤΕ ΑΥΩ ΝCΟΝ
 ΕΠΕΧC ΚΑΤΑΠΕΨΒΙΟC·

But why do I attempt to count the multitude of the stars? I am speaking of the abundance of the virtuous actions of this blessed man who is worthy of heaven.

For who, O our father, has preserved perfection like you, O our father, with the likeness of God in him undefiled?³⁶

Who has achieved the impassibility of the incorporeal beings more than you while yet in the body?

What earthborn man had trodden under the nature of those on earth and has acquired the nobility of those in heaven that he might be with them like you, O our father? O, how shall I be able to speak of the greatness of the honours which befit this holy man, man in his nature but equal to the angels in his ways, this earth-born man according to his substance but son of God and brother of Christ according to his way of life!

After additional descriptions of Apa Apollo's ascetic toils, virtues, and visions, Stephen recounts a vision of Christ, who comes to encourage Apollo in his struggles (§7). The author compares his contests to those of the martyrs, taking as his point of reference Athanasius' comment regarding Antony, that «he was a martyr daily in his conscience» (§8).³⁷ Then, with terminology borrowed openly from the Apocalypse and numerous prophetic passages from the Old Testament, Stephen turns to the events that led Apollo to leave the monastery of Pbow, the renewed efforts of Justinian to impose the «innovation» of Chalcedon.³⁸ He describes the nature of the error, how Egypt led by Dioscorus, was like a light on a lamp-stand, then passes to the time of Justinian, mentioning Severus and Theodosius and then how the archimandrite Abraham of Pbow was deposed. This led to the departure also of Apollo like «a lily who uprooted himself from among the thorns of the heretics» (§9). Apollo, whom Christ had «planted» at Pbow, is now brought north by Christ to found this new monastery (§9). There is a considerable rhetorical play on the word «plant» with reference to the Apollo mentioned by Paul (1 Cor 3:6). This is followed by accounts of his teaching (involving numerous figural interpretations of the Scriptures) and exhortations as superior, his ordination to the priesthood, his building of the present church (the result of a vision) and various miracles. Finally his holy death is recounted with his last exhortations (§17-20). The encomium concludes with a final peroration in the form of an apostrophic prayer addressed to the saint.

36 This is a reference back to the first line after the *proemion*: «Now this man was created in the image of God (Gen 1:27) and he kept the honour of this image pure» (§3).

37 *Vita Ant.* 47. It is worthy of note that Stephen cites also Basil, Chrysostom and Shenoute.

38 It is of some interest that Stephen credits the emperor Marcian with the origin of this innovation (§8).

In other words, although the details of the saint's life are sparse, the encomium follows the classical form and is embellished with numerous examples of *synkrisis*, apostrophe, and word-play. It manifests a clear familiarity with the high style suited to such an occasion. The numerous references to authors such as Athanasius, Basil, Chrysostom, Shenoute, Severus, as well as to the founders of the Pachomian congregation, show that he was also well acquainted with the literature.

The Encomium of Elias

Nothing is known of this martyr and apparently the author of the encomium had very little to go on other than the fact of the existence the shrine dedicated to Elias and the miracles worked there. In the *proœmium* he seems to admit as much, speaking of victorious martyrs in each city and land:

ΚΑΝ ΜΠΕΝΒΩΚ ΝΜΜΑΥ ΕΠΑΙΚΑCΤΗΡΙΟΝ ΟΥΔΕ ΜΠΕΝΘΕΩΡΕΙ
 ΜΝΑΓΩΝ
 ΝΤΑΥΖΥΠΟΜΙΝΕ ΕΡΟΟΥ ΖΑΠΕΧ̄C
 ΑΛΛΑ ΖΙΤ̄ΝΤΑΩΗΤ ΝCΧΑΡΙCΜΑ ΕΤΩΟΠ ΖΝΝΕΥΕΥΚΤΗΡΙΟΝ
 ΨΑΝΕΙΜΕ ΕΤΕΥΜΝΤΝΟC ΜΝΝΕΥΤΑΙΟ ΝΑΖΡ̄Μ̄ΠΧΟΕΙC

Although we have not accompanied them before the tribunal and have not contemplated the combat they endured for Christ, nevertheless, because of the number of favors they grant in their sanctuaries, we know their greatness and their glory with the Lord.

To develop his *proœmium*, Stephen plays at some length upon the similarity between the name Elias and the Greek word for sun, without actually mentioning the Greek word, but stating explicitly that the meaning of Elias in Greek is the sun (ΘΕΡΜΕΝΙΑ ΓΑΡ ΝΖΗΛΙΑC ΝΖΟCΟΝ ΚΑΤΑ ΖΕΛΕΝΙΚΗ ΠΕ ΠΡΗ). He notes that Jesus had stated that the just will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father, but he said that of all the just. Saint Elias, on the other hand, resembles the sun by his name, his virtues and his splendor.

After the *proœmium*, he announces the subject (ΟΥΠΟΘΕCΙC) that «has brought us together for the commemoration of this day, Saint Elias» (fol. 35v). He identifies Elias as having been a soldier and a physician, presumably because of the healings worked in his sanctuary, «Elias was in truth the general of his king the Christ and the physician of all those who are sick». After insisting that he was not a common worker, but a member of the nobility, he develops the theme through a series of antithetical statements:

ΟΥΡΜΜΑΟ ΠΕ ΖΝΝΕΤΟΥΟΝΖ ΕΒΟΛ
 ΟΥΡΜΜΑΟ ΠΕ ΖΝΝΕΧΑΡΙCΜΑ ΜΠΕΧ̄C
 ΟΥΡΕCΠΟΛΥΜΕΙ ΠΕ ΕΠΕΖΟΥΟ ΜΝΝΕΧΑΧΕ ΕΤΟΥΟΝΖ ΕΒΟΛ
 ΟΥΡΕCΧΡΟ ΠΕ ΕΠΕΖΟΥΟ ΕΠΑΝΔΙΚΙΜΕΝΟC ΕΘΟΥ ΕΤΖΗΤ
 CΖΗΤ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕΠΡΟ ΜΠΕΙΚΟCΜΟC
 ΑΥΩ CΟ ΠΩΒΗΡ ΕΠΡΟ ΝΤΠΕ ΜΝΠΚΑΖ ΠΕΧ̄C ΙC
 ΑΥΤΑCCE ΜΜΟC ΕΤΜΝΤΜΑΤΟΙ ΕΠΝΟΥΜΕΡΟΝ ΝΝΑΠΚΑΖ
 ΑΥΤΑCCE ΜΜΟC ΖΩΩC ΕΤΜΑΝΔΡΙΚΗ ΝΝΜΠΗΥΕ ΖΙΤΝ ΠΑΘΛΟΝ
 ΝΘΟΜΟΛΟΓΙΑ
 ΝΕC ΟΝ CΑΕΙΝ ΖΝΟΥΠΟΛΙC ΝΟΥΩΤ ΝΩΟΡΠ
 ΤΕΝΟΥ ΔΕ ΑCΩΩΠΕ ΠΡΕCΘΕΡΑΠΕΥΕ ΝΝΕΤΖΗΝ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕΡΟC
 ΜΝΝΕΤΖΕΜΠΟΥΕ

He was rich among those who were well known,
 He was rich was rich in the favors of Christ.
 He was a great warrior against the enemies that were known,
 He was a brilliant conqueror of the adversaries of evil who were invisible.
 He was near to the king of this world,
 And he was the friend of the king of heaven and earth, Christ Jesus.
 He was counted in the army with the number of those who possess the earth,
 He was also counted among the forces of heaven because of the combat of his
 confession.
 He was physician first in a single city,
 Now he is the healer of those who have drawn near to him and those far away
 (fol. 36r).

This type of parallel/antithetical structure is repeated frequently in the encomium. Since the author did not really know anything about Elias, there is no real historical development in this encomium as there is in the one on Apollo. He is constrained to rely upon purely formal elements to develop his subject. He compares him to Daniel, whom he resembles because he also despised the servants of idols and confessed Christ. Then, since he is a physician, he is to be compared to Luke. It is worthy of note that Stephen introduces the same metaphor «like a lily among thorns» to describe Elias that he had used for Apollo (fol. 38r). Further on he introduces a saying of the wise (ΝCΟΦΟC) concerning the nature of gold, that it is to be proved three times in the fire. So it was with Elias. This is in fact an example of another of the *progymnasmata*, «maxim». A second example of maxim is then introduced by saying that wise physicians say the month of «Paremhotep is a month that gives rise to sicknesses of the body, because it is the time of the germination of the plants». Just as God saved Israel

through prodigies and miracles, so Providence has disposed that the feast of the holy physician should fall in the month in which sicknesses are produce so that his holy prayers may heal all in soul and body (fol. 42r).

At this point Stephen seems to have exhausted what he has to say about Elias and announces that he will say a few words also about the holy brethren who are buried in his sanctuary. They were presumably ascetics, although neither names nor details are provided. This allows the preacher to speak about the healing of the soul and the struggle against the passions (ΠΑΘΟΣ). Luke is invoked again (Luke 9:1) because of having reported that the Lord had said to his disciples that he would give them power cast out impure spirits and heal all sorts of sicknesses. «He who casts out of his heart the evil spirits, which are the impure thoughts, heals his soul and his body» (fol. 44r). An apostrophe is then introduced addressed to «O man», inviting him to chase out of his soul these passions. Stephen then concludes that it is fitting for the bones of the ascetics to rest beside those of the martyrs, because the ascetic life and that of the martyrs does not differ and is equal in result (fol. 45r). Further on he concludes: «You have seen that monasticism is the sister of martyrdom for whoever will have followed it without hypocrisy and without deceit» (ΑΚΝΑΥ ΧΕ ΤΜΝΤΜΟΝΑΧΟC ΤCΩΝΕ ΔΕ ΝΤΜΝΤΜΑΡ-ΤΥΡΟC ΜΠΕΤΝΑΔΔΑC ΑΧΕΝΖΥΠΟΚΡΙCΙC ΖΙ CΑΚ ΜΜΝΤΝΟΥΧ, fol. 45v). This theme was encountered also in the encomium of Apollo. The work concludes with a final peroration of exhortations to seek the Lord, to confess the Lord like the martyrs, to imitate the holy ascetics, and to repentance (fol. 47r-v).

Although this piece lacks some of the traditional elements expected in an encomium, e.g., historical development of the life of the saint, specific deeds, etc., it is composed throughout in the high style making use of *synkrisis*, apostrophe, antithesis, maxim and with a properly elegant *proemium* and a final peroration. There is no reason to doubt that the author is the same as that of the encomium of Apollo.

4.3 Constantine of Assiut

Four encomia in Sahidic Coptic have been preserved under the name of Constantine of Assiut, of which two are of St. Athanasius and two of St. Claude of Antioch.³⁹

39 T. ORLANDI, *Constantini episcopi urbis Siout encomia in Athanasium duo* (CSCO 349-350, *Scriptores coptici* 37-38), Louvain 1974. G. GODRON, *Textes coptes relatifs à saint Claude d'Antioche* (PO 35,4), Turnhout 1970. For historical data on Constantine, see R.-G. COQUIN, «Constantine: History», in *The Coptic Encyclopedia* 2, ed. A.S. Atiya, New York 1991, 591-592.

Additional encomia in Arabic are attributed to him.⁴⁰ As Orlandi observed, the two encomia of Athanasius show a concern to observe what the author considered to be the rules for such rhetorical compositions. Both encomia begin with a relatively long *proæmium*, then an exposition of three miraculous episodes in which Athanasius is the protagonist and conclude with a final peroration. Each contains also an excursus, historical in the first encomium, ethical in the second. Constantine also makes use of inclusions, for example, the introduction of the citation of Prov 10:7 at the beginning of the *proæmium* (1,1) and at the end (2,21). In the second encomium we find the observation at the beginning (1,3) and at the end (4,28), that it is good to hear the life of Athanasius because it serves as an example and admonition for every type of the faithful.

Constantine also employs *synkrisis*. In the first encomium, he compares Athanasius at length with Moses in the *proæmium*. He concludes (1,19) that the great Athanasius is in no way inferior to Moses and the resistance Moses encountered from the obstinate Israelites and the rebellion of Dathan and Abiram are nothing compared to the intrigues of the Arians against the great Athanasius. In the *proæmium* of the second encomium, Constantine plays with the title «apostolic», conferred by the tradition on Athanasius, and compares Athanasius «the apostolic» to other «holy fathers and teachers of the church» (ΠΣΕΕΠΕ ΜΕΝ ΝΝΕΝΕΙΟΤΕ ΕΤΟΥΛΑΒ ΝCΑΖ ΝΤΕΚΚΛΗCΙΑ) including Gregory Thaumaturgus, Gregory Nazianzen, Basil and John Chrysostom. Each of these received an epithet such as «theologian», but the epithet «apostolic» of Athanasius is superior to all of these (§4-6). This comparison had been cleverly introduced by a citation of the «Apostle» to provide a foundation for the encomium «like a wise architect» (1 Cor 3:10), «because he is also an apostle for whom the discourse is being prepared. It is truly fitting then that the Apostle begin the encomium of the Apostle after the apostles» (ΕΒΟΛ ΧΕ ΟΥΑΠΟC-ΤΟΛΟC ΠΕ, ΕΡΕ ΠΛΟΓΟC CΩΡ ΜΜΟC ΕΒΟΛ· ΩΩΕ ΓΑΡ ΑΛΗΘΩC ΕΤΡΕ ΠΑΠΟCΤΟΛΟC ΑΡΧΕΙ ΕΠΕΓΚΩΜΙΟΝ ΜΠΑΠΟCΤΟΛΟC ΜΝΝCΑ ΝΑΠΟCΤΟΛΟC).

This is followed by a long passage playing on the word for «clothe» also introduced by a Scriptural quotation (§7): «True priest of God, Athanasius, who put on righteousness, as it is written, “Your priests will put on righteousness”» (Ps 131:9) (ΠΟΥΗΗΒ ΜΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΖΝΟΥΜΕ ΑΘΑΝΑCΙΟC, ΠΑΙ ΝΤΑC† ΝΤ-ΔΙΚΑΙΟCΥΝΗ ΖΙΩΩC ΚΑΤΑΘΕ ΕΤCΗΖ ΧΕ· ΝΕΚΟΥΗΗΒ ΝΑ† ΖΙΩΟΥ

40 For the writings preserved in Arabic, see: K. SAMIR, S.J., «Constantine's Writings», in *The Coptic Encyclopedia* 2, ed. A.S. Atiya, New York 1991, 592-593.

ΝΟΥΔΙΚΑΙΟCΥΝΗ). The word «clothe» is used repeatedly then in a polemic (*psogos*) against the priests who have not «put on» righteousness but drunkenness.

It is interesting to note that Constantine uses the word *encomion* (ΕΓΚΩΜΙΟΝ) several times to describe what he is doing. He also makes use of apostrophe and of course numerous citations from Scripture. There is no doubt that his compositions qualify as belonging to the «high» style suitable for panegyric, that is, public occasions. Nevertheless, compared to John of Shmun and Stephen of Hnēs, his style is less ornate and he does not follow the normal series of topics for an encomium. There is, for example, no development of Athanasius' birth, childhood, progress in virtue, or finally, his death. Praise in the body of the encomia is limited to three specific miraculous episodes.

The Encomia of St. Claude

Garitte already expressed doubt about the authorship of the other two encomia attributed to Constantine concerning St. Claude of Antioch.⁴¹ From the point of view of rhetorical style, they do not compare favorably to those on Athanasius. Both encomia of St. Claude are introduced by a brief schematic prayer rather than a true *proæmion*: «Blessed is God the Father and blessed is his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and the life-giving Holy Spirit, he who has made us worthy to be assembled in this holy oratory today to celebrate the one to whom God has given the glory among the martyrs».⁴² After announcing that he is turning to the sufferings of the martyrs and their stories, the writer states that in the ninth year of Diocletian an edict was published ordering the destruction of the Scriptures. Then other edicts were published that those engaged in the service of the church should be put in prison and forced to sacrifice to idols. Many Christians of all classes die for the faith. The author then turns to the genealogy of Claude, recounting how Claude was the son of the sister of the emperor Carinus, predecessor of Diocletian, thus giving him royal birth. He is given an education like Moses, in arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and rhetoric. He is admired by all, is handsome and well-spoken and so he is sent to the king at Rome (Diocletian), who dresses him with a royal mantel, puts a crown on his head and has him ride in the same chariot with him. Then Diocletian is involved

41 G. GARITTE, *Constantin, évêque d'Assiout* in *Coptic Studies in Honor of Walter Ewing Crum* (Bulletin of the Byzantine Institute 2), Boston 1950, 287-304.

42 GODRON, *Textes coptes*, 508-509. Introduction to the first encomium.

in a war with the Armenians, who threaten him with destruction. Diocletian tells Claude that he has no fear while he (Claude) is with him. The war ensues and Claude vanquishes the Armenians for the king, who in gratitude makes him ride in a golden chariot and erects a monument to him in Rome before allowing him to return to his own city (Antioch). The author states that Diocletian was Christian at that time, but the devil (p. 525) was jealous of the church and turned the heart of the king to idols. He then destroyed churches and tried to make Claude adore idols. This is sufficient to give the flavor of these encomia. They are filled with vivid dialogue, not a feature of the classical encomium.

Obviously we are in a different and later cultural world than that of the real Constantine of Assiut. These are stories that circulated in the shrines of the martyrs Claude and Victor, portrayed as victorious warriors mounted on horses, who intervene miraculously on the side of justice. The resemblances to the classical Christian encomium are at best superficial. At the end of the first encomium to Claude, the author exclaims «O orator (ⲱ ⲡⲉⲗⲡⲏⲧⲱⲡ) such as not found in Berytus or Athens, conqueror of Scythians and Massagetes and above all of the hidden war of Satan, I call on you because you have made us worthy to assemble for your holy commemoration...». The author's contact with the classical rhetorical tradition has been minimal. It is simply not possible to imagine that the same writer capable of producing the encomia of Athanasius could also have produced these of Claude.

4.4 Comparison with other encomia

There are in fact many other such pieces that are described in the superscriptions as encomium, but which in fact manifest little knowledge of the traditional forms or style such as illustrated by these three authors. For purposes of comparison, one may mention of a few of them. An encomium of Macarius of Tkow is attributed to the patriarch Dioscurus.⁴³ As such it belongs to a special, though extensive, genre of compositions with fictive authorship, where the fiction is built into the composition.⁴⁴ This encomium begins with a brief *proæmion* that contains a somewhat inept comparison of Macarius with a lancer,

43 See D.W. JOHNSON, *A Panegyric on Macarius: Bishop of Tkow, Attributed to Dioscorus of Alexandria*, (CSCO 415), Louvain 1980. An Italian translation may be found in ORLANDI, *Omélie copte*, 159-198.

44 For another example of this sort attributed to Evodius of Rome, see my article: *A Homily on the Death of the Virgin Mary attributed to Evodius of Rome*, in this volume, 35-147.

stating that, although Macarius was not a lancer, that is, he did not know Greek, nevertheless he came with «us» to the battle of Chalcedon. The composition continues with a description of the journey to Chalcedon replete with dialogue and recounts numerous miracles of Macarius. However, there is no development of the life of Macarius in the traditional manner. The composition is basically anti-Chalcedonian propaganda, although at the end there is an account of the death and burial of the saint, which concludes with a brief invocation of his aid in maintaining the orthodox faith. Similar compositions entitled *encomia* can be found in the volume of «encomiastica» from the Morgan Library. They do not show acquaintance with the classical rhetorical tradition of encomiastic writing.⁴⁵

On the other hand, an encomium on John the Baptist attributed to Theodosius of Alexandria does show a good knowledge of this tradition and follows the established rules.⁴⁶ It begins with an elegant *proæmion*, passes to an invitation to the evangelist Luke to come into the midst of the assembly, narrates the conception of the Baptist, his birth, the massacre of the innocents, the preaching of John, the baptism of Jesus, the martyrdom of John, and concludes with a fitting peroration in praise of the Baptist. Whether or not Theodosius was the author, the writer was well acquainted with the classical encomiastic tradition and was trained in rhetorical skills.

5. CONCLUSION

This brings us to a final consideration: how did these authors, who show a good knowledge of the classical rhetorical tradition and a training in it, acquire their

⁴⁵ *Encomiastica from the Pierpont Morgan Library. Five Coptic Homilies Attributed to Anastasius of Euchaita, Epiphanius of Salamis, Isaac of Antioch, Severian of Gabala, and Theopompus of Antioch*, ed. L. Depuydt (CSCO 545), Louvain 1993. As Susan Ashbrook Harvey notes in the introduction, «in each case a brief introduction announces the saint for whose feast the homily is given and identifies the (pseudonymous) author; a brief prayer closes each text. In between these border devices a straightforward narrative prevails. What we miss are the encomiastic features familiar from other orations: passages in which the author interrupts the story for more or less extended exclamations of praise, passages in which the audience is directly addressed, or passages in which the work or activity of the saint is interpreted by the author as commentator. Stripped of their brief introductory and concluding sentences, these homilies stand much closer to traditional hagiographical *vitæ*» (vi).

⁴⁶ K. H. KUHN, *A Panegyric on John the Baptist attributed to Theodosius archbishop of Alexandria* (CSCO 268-269), Louvain 1966. An Italian translation by T. Orlandi may be found in: *Omèlie Copte*, 201-232.

skills? The traditional method was by studying with famous trained orators such as Himerius, Prohaeresius and Libanius or with much less famous ones such as practiced their profession in sixth century Egypt. The training involved mastering the building blocks of oratory, the *progymnasmata*, and this could only be done by repeated exercises, which would be corrected and criticized by the teachers, as is done to this day. It is doubtful that John of Shmun, Stephen of Hnēs or Constantine of Assiut could have acquired such skills simply by reading the past masters such as Gregory Nazianzen in Coptic translation, as they undoubtedly did. Practice is indispensable.

In his presentation of John of Shmun's encomium of Antony, Garitte had hinted at the bilingual culture of the author by pointing out that certain references to Athanasius' *Life of Antony* were best explained as independent translations from the Greek.⁴⁷ Kuhn, in his introduction to Stephen of Hnēs' encomium of Apollo, noted the strong Greek influence, but concluded that «he composed the work for a Coptic-speaking audience in Coptic». He emphasized that this is not «unthinkable in the context of a strongly bilingual Byzantine Egypt».⁴⁸ Orlandi, taking into account the period (late sixth century), the culture of the period, and the upper Egyptian setting of Constantine of Assiut, postulated a Coptic original.⁴⁹ Given then these works composed in Coptic, which manifest a good knowledge of the rhetorical tradition and skill in its use, one must ask how these writers acquired their skills. The hypothesis must be sufficient to account for the results. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that these authors were bilingual and had probably studied in a Greek or a bilingual school of rhetoric. By this latter phrase of course must be understood not modern formal scholastic institutions, but the less structured arrangements of late antique Egypt.⁵⁰ The late sixth century represented then a high point in Coptic literary culture, an achievement that would not have been possible a century later when the Greco-Coptic bilingual cultural base had been destroyed.

47 GARITTE, «Panégyrique de saint Antoine par Jean, l'évêque d'Hermopolis», 107-108.

48 K.H. KUHN, *A Panegyric on Apollo* (CSCO 394, Scriptorum Coptici 39), xii.

49 T. ORLANDI, *Constantini episcopi* (CSCO 350, Scriptorum Coptici 38), vii.

50 See CRIBIORE, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, passim, and for the flexibility and relative length of rhetorical education: R. CRIBIORE, *The School of Libanius in Late Antique Antioch*, Princeton 2007.

THE BIBLE AS READ BY THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH¹

In seeking to understand patristic interpretation, it is important to keep in mind how different their intellectual world was from ours. From our point of view, theirs was a very foreshortened view of the human past. At the beginning of his great work, *The Jewish Antiquities*, originally published in AD 93-94, the Jewish author Flavius Josephus notes that the sacred Scriptures «embrace the history of five thousand years» and that «our lawgiver», that is, Moses, «was born two thousand years ago, to which ancient date the poets never ventured to refer even the birth of their gods, much less the actions or the laws of mortals».² This chronological vision was destined to endure for well over another 1500 years. In the last 500 years tools of critical analysis have been developed, which were unavailable to ancient authors, and this has led to a process of historicization. There has been an irreversible development of historical consciousness, or growth of awareness of the process of development in history, that makes it impossible to apply many of the ancient presuppositions and rules today. But the world of ancient biblical interpretation was quite coherent within itself.

In the first 150 years after the Resurrection it is difficult to speak of a systematic or even consistent Christian approach to the Scriptures. We find a marked tendency to treat them as oracles and they were used selectively to the extent that they could provide material to interpret the figure of Jesus Christ or for moral

1 This paper was presented originally at the Congress of the Catholic Biblical Federation held in Rome on December 3, 2010. It has been published in Italian as «Da alcune letture patristiche della Bibbia», in *Ascoltare, Rispondere, Vivere. Atti del Congresso Internazionale «La Sacra Scrittura nella vita e nella missione della Chiesa» (Roma, 1-4 dicembre 2010)*, ed. E. Borghi, Roma 2011, 31-44.

2 *Jewish Antiquities* I,3. (FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS, *Jewish Antiquities* (LCL 242), ed. H.St.J. Thackeray, Cambridge, Mass. 1930, 7-9. Josephus wrote in Greek at Rome where he had taken the name Flavius in honor of his royal patrons, the Flavian emperors Vespasian and Titus. Josephus modeled the title of his work on an earlier work by Dionysius of Halicarnassus in 7 BC entitled *Roman Antiquities*. His purpose in doing so was certainly to stress the greater antiquity of Jewish history stretching, as it did in the Scriptures, back to creation. By way of comparison, however, one may note that Plato in the *Timaeus* (23E) has the history of Athens stretch back at least nine thousand years.

exhortation. The limits of what would later be called the canon of Scripture were uncertain. At the beginning of course there were no specifically Christian Scriptures, only the law, the prophets and the other writings. The first Christian author, Paul of Tarsus, cites and alludes to the Law, many of the prophets, the psalms and other writings and his interpretations contributed decisively to the way in which the Scriptures would be read in the patristic period.³

By the end of this period in the last quarter of the second century, the situation was quite different. There were now Christian Scriptures recognized as such, even though some works were not accepted by all, and a growing body of other writings such as the Letter of Barnabas, the writings of Justin and then of Irenaeus, to cite but a few, in which there was extensive interpretation of what would be called the «old» Scriptures. The need to combat Marcion's innovations and the various Gnostic interpretations had contributed decisively to the formation of the new literature.

With Clement of Alexandria we find the first extensive theoretical approach to the nature of the Scriptures. For Clement, the Scriptures, like all sacred texts, are by their nature enigmatic.⁴ The Word of God is not in the first place the written Scriptures, but the divine Logos. It is he who by becoming himself the gospel «breaks the mystic silence of the prophetic enigmas».⁵ Thus Christ, the Word of God, is the hermeneutical key for all of the written Scriptures. The Logos acts in fact as hierophant who initiates his own into the truly sacred mysteries of the Father, an exegetical activity, as the divine mysteries are hidden in the Scriptures.⁶ The Scriptures must also be interpreted in a manner that is fitting to divinity, *theoprepeia*, a concept to which we shall return later. For Clement this *theoprepeia* is to be understood in terms of the divine *philanthropia*, God's love for the human race, revealed by the Logos.⁷

Origen of Alexandria, however, is by far the most important figure in the development of the patristic understanding of Scripture. His influence on later commentators is immeasurable. He is the first to produce running commentar-

3 See E.E. ELLIS, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids 1981, and R.B. HAYS, *The Conversion of the Imagination. Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture*, Grand Rapids 2005.

4 CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Strom.* 5, 4-10.

5 CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Protreptikon* 1,10,1. See S. KEOUGH, *Exegesis Worthy of God. The Development of Biblical Interpretation in Alexandria*, Diss. University of St. Michael's College, Toronto 2007, 139-140.

6 CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Protreptikon* 12.120.1.

7 CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Strom.* 7,1,3,6ff; KEOUGH, *Exegesis Worthy of God*, 155-156.

ies on most of the books of the Old and New Testament; the literary forms he employed, homilies following *lectio continua* of books read in the liturgy, formal commentaries (*tomoi*) and answers to disputed questions, were imitated by later writers in both the east and the west for many centuries. He was also the first to compose a formal treatise on the nature of the Scriptures and the rules to be employed in interpretation in the fourth book of his great work known as *Peri Archon* or *De Principiis*.

For Origen as for Clement, the word of God in the fullest sense is the divine Logos, the incarnate Son of God.⁸ However, the question of the unity of the Scriptures was a major concern for Origen as a result of the Gnostic and Marcionite challenge. Consequently he stresses that the entire Scriptures are the word of Christ and Christ is the key to understanding all of them. By «words of Christ» he means not only those words which formed his teaching after the incarnation, but also Moses and the prophets who were filled with the spirit of Christ. For it is the same Word of God that is found in the Scriptures before the Incarnation as the Word Incarnate.⁹ The entire Scriptures are revelation of Christ, whether the Old Testament (the law and the prophets) or the New Testament (the gospel and the apostles). Christ himself, since he is the Logos, is the word of God and consequently Christ and the Scriptures are to be identified. Scripture is the perennial incarnation of the Logos. Thus Origen can identify the treasure hidden in the field (Matt 13:44) with both Christ and with Scripture¹⁰ and likewise compares the Word of God that is clothed with flesh through Mary with the Scripture that is covered with the veil of the literal sense.¹¹ Only through a searching study of the Scriptures can we know Christ. The same concern for knowing Christ in the Scriptures and for the significance of every detail is reflected Origen's view that to preach the word of God is to preach Christ and is a process of revelation realized in the understanding created in the individual mind of the listener. The word preached and received in the heart and understanding of the individual constructs the tabernacle in which the Lord lives. The reception of the details of the word may be compared to the reception of the body of the Lord in the Eucharist.¹²

8 M. SHERIDAN, «Old Testament», «Scripture», in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, ed. J.A. McGuckin, Louisville 2004, 159-162, 197-201.

9 *PArch* 1, praef. 1; *HomIs* 1:5; *SerMt* 28:54.119; *FragmJn* 46.

10 *ComMt* 10,6.

11 *HomLev* 1,1.

12 *HomEx* 13,3.

Origen's approach to the Scriptures depends on certain presuppositions about their nature, the first and most important of which is that the text of Scripture is «divine writing», not human. Through an examination of the fulfillment of the «oracles» of Christ (Matt 24:14; 7:22) and of other prophetic utterances in the Scriptures (Gen 49:10; Hos 3:4), Origen demonstrates the divine nature of the Scriptures or, as he says, that they are «divine writings».¹³ Origen accepts the common doctrine that the Holy Spirit inspired all the authors of Scripture, whether Moses or the Apostles, to such an extent that the Holy Spirit is to be considered the true author of the sacred texts.¹⁴ The corollary of this is that «the words which are believed by us to be from God are not the compositions of men»,¹⁵ a conclusion that has important consequences for the concept of «Scripture» and its interpretation. The same idea is restated further on: «the sacred books are not the works of men... they were composed and have come down to us as a result of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by the will of the Father of the universe through Jesus Christ».¹⁶

Building on the basic principle that Scripture contains an esoteric or cryptic sense,¹⁷ an assumption he shared with virtually all ancient interpreters, Origen cites Prov 22:20-21 to justify the idea of a threefold sense in the Scriptures, an idea supported also by comparison with the human composite of body, soul and spirit (1 Thes 5:23).¹⁸ This theoretical foundation allowed Origen to perceive at least two spiritual senses hidden beneath the veil of the letter, which also correspond to different degrees of spiritual initiation or progress: beginners, advanced and perfect (cf. 1 Cor 2:6), a progression found already in Philo.¹⁹ This progression can also be seen to correspond to the division of the law, the prophets and the gospel.²⁰

13 *theiōn grammaton* (*PArch* 4,1,2-3).

14 *PArch* 1, praef. 4; *PArch* 1,3,1; 4,2,7; 4,3,14; *CCels* 3,3; 5,60; *ComMt* 14,4; *HomGn* 7,1; *HomEx* 2,1; *HomNum* 1,1; 2,1; *HomJos* 8,6; *Hom 1R (1S)* 5,4.

15 *anthrōpōn suggrammata* (*PArch* 4,1,6).

16 *PArch* 4,2,2.

17 *PArch* 1, praef. 8; 4,2,2.

18 *PArch* 4,2,4; *HomNum* 9,7; *HomLev* 5,1. This more organic concept of Scripture had been developed earlier by Philo of Alexandria, who had compared the Scriptures to a living being with body and soul (*De vita contemplativa* 78)

19 Cf. also *HomJos* 6,1; *ComMt* 12,32.

20 *HomLev* 1,4.

Another basic assumption Origen shared with other ancient interpreters was that of the actuality of the Scriptures. He often cites 1 Cor 10, especially verses 6 and 11, to emphasize that the Scriptures were written «for us», and reach their fulfillment in the present time (the time of the church), which is also understood as the end of the ages. The text is often cited as an introduction to moral exhortation, which is indeed the original Pauline context of 1 Cor 10:1-11. Commenting on the expression «by mud and bricks» (Exod 1:14) Origen states: «These words were not written to instruct us in history, nor must we think that the divine books narrate the acts of the Egyptians. What has been written has been written for our instruction and admonition» and, in dealing with the command of the king of Egypt to the midwives to kill the male children of the Israelites, he observes that we «have learned that all things which are written are written not to relate ancient history, but for our discipline and use».²¹ To this general idea of the actuality of the Scriptures Paul had added the concept of the two ages (1 Cor 10:11) which considerably facilitates the possibility of allegorical comparisons between the two ages, then and now, such as is found in 1 Cor 10:1-11 and Gal 4:21-24. Since the text is «for us», it must also have a meaning that is «useful» to us, a criterion of interpretation that had already been developed by Philo and was suggested also by the affirmation that «all Scripture is useful» (2 Tim 3:16).²² «Useful» generally means that which is helpful for moral or spiritual nourishment.²³

Another presupposition about the nature of the text, which also becomes a criterion of interpretation, is that its real meaning must be «worthy of the divine majesty».²⁴ In this phrase we can perceive an ancient idea that goes back to the philosopher Xenophanes, an idea that had been used as a hermeneutical tool in the interpretation of Homer and then later by Philo in the interpretation of the Law of Moses where its most characteristic expression is found in the word *theoprepēs* meaning «fitting» or «appropriate» to God. The concept is formulated by Origen also in the context of the controversial principle of the missing literal sense (*defectus litterae*). He explains that certain stumbling-blocks and impossibilities have been inserted in the law and the history «in order that we

21 *HomEx* 1,5; other texts where Origen cites 1 Cor 10:6,11 include: *HomEx* 7,4; *HomJos* 5,2; *HomJud* 2,3; *HomJer* 12,3;19,15; *HomEz* 12,2.

22 See *Hom 1R(1S)* 5,2; *PArch* 4,1,7; 4,2,6; *HomNum* 27,1.

23 See M. SHERIDAN, «The Concept of the “Useful” as an Exegetical Tool in Patristic Exegesis», in this volume, 177-182.

24 *HomLev* 7,5.

may not be completely drawn away by the sheer attractiveness of the language, and so either reject the true doctrines absolutely, on the ground that we learn from the Scriptures nothing worthy of God, or else by never moving away from the letter fail to learn anything of the more divine element». The more skillful and inquiring readers may thus «gain a sound conviction of the necessity of seeking in such instances a meaning worthy of God».²⁵ This principle as well as the accompanying ideas of illogical (*alogon*) and impossible (*adunaton*) things inserted into the text by the divine author in order to incite the reader to seek a suitable meaning are already used extensively by Philo of Alexandria.

These presuppositions produce a paradoxical situation: the text on the literal level may not be worthy of God, but, when it is given a spiritual interpretation, it can be seen to be divine and, viewed as a divine composition, it is superior to all other human texts. Origen remarks: «And he who approaches the prophetic words with care and attention will feel from his very reading a trace of their divine inspiration (*to entheon*) and will be convinced by his own feelings that the words which are believed by us to be from God are not the compositions of men». The reader is able to perceive the inspired nature (*to entheon*) of the Scripture through a kind of mystical transport or «enthusiasm» (*enthusiasmos*). It may be possible to perceive this even on the level of the literal text, but certainly not in the literal level of many or most texts of the Old Testament, for Origen says explicitly that it was not possible before the advent of Christ. What is perceived then is not the literal text but the «spiritual nature» or the «light» contained within the Law of Moses.²⁶

Another consequence of the idea of the divine, not human, composition of Scripture is that God is the author of the text even in (what a modern writer might consider) its most insignificant details. Commenting on Gen 22:1 where God calls out «Abraham, Abraham», Origen exhorts his congregation, «Observe each detail which has been written. For, if one knows how to dig into the depth, he will find a treasure in the details, and perhaps also, the precious jewels of the mysteries lie hidden where they are not esteemed».²⁷ The phrase «a treasure in the details» could be taken as emblematic for a certain understanding of the nature of the biblical text itself. In this particular case Origen goes on to explain that nowhere had God ever called Abraham by the name Abram nor

25 *PArch* 4,2,9.

26 *PArch* 4,1,6; see also *ComJn* 1,30 [33,205]; *CCels* 6,5.

27 *HomGn* 8:1.

had he ever said «Abram, Abram». The reason why God never called Abraham by the name Abram is that he could not call him by a name that was to be abolished, but only by the name that he himself gave, the name that means «I have made you a father of many nations» (Gen 17:5). Similar details such as «the high land» (Gen 22:2 LXX), «the third day» (Gen 22:3) serve as a springboard for spiritual or Christological interpretations.²⁸ Thus details are given a high significance that they did not have in the original context of the narrative of the sacrifice of Isaac. This procedure may even run counter to the normal rules of rhetoric as in the case of Origen's interpretation of «the hand of Moses and Aaron» (Num 33:1 LXX) to represent two aspects of the spiritual life, the practical and the contemplative, inseparably united (one hand) even though this is a clear case of *synecdoche* (use of singular for plural), a well-known figure of speech.²⁹ Such procedures are possible because of the basic conception of the text as an oracular, encoded text, with an esoteric meaning, even if the text itself is public and widely diffused.

A result of this conception of the text is the devaluation of the historical or narrative character of the text. In another example of attention to details, Origen observes that the expressions «to go up» and «to go down» (Gen 13:1) are never employed in such a way that «anyone said to have gone down to an holy place nor is anyone related to have gone up to a blameworthy place». This demonstrates that Scripture was composed with care (attention to details) and not «in illiterate and uncultivated language», because Scripture is devoted not «so much to historical narratives as to things and ideas which are mystical».³⁰ The contrast between history and mystery, found many times in Origen, is part of his inheritance from Philo³¹ and has its roots in the Greek view that neither history nor natural science can provide the truth that is really useful. What is really useful is perennially valid, whereas history is contingent and particular. Origen's Homily 27 on Numbers is an excellent example where the narrative of Israel's movements in the desert is made to reveal mystical truths about the economy of salvation and/or the journey of the soul. This means «seeking out the mysteries of the Scriptures with attentive exertions»,³² that is, deciphering the letter in order to find the spiritual content. The term mystery had been em-

28 *HomGn* 8, 3-4.

29 *HomNum* 27,6.

30 *HomGn* 15,1.

31 E.g., *Somn.* 1,52-58; *Cher.* 42-49.

32 *HomNum* 27,8.

ployed extensively by Paul to indicate God's plan or dispensation revealed in Jesus Christ. Origen of course knows and cites these passages from Paul, but the idea of Scripture itself as containing or covering mysteries had already been developed extensively by Philo to whom, as already noted, Origen is deeply indebted.

In practice the meaning that is useful for us and fitting to God is often achieved through recourse to the principle of interpreting the Scriptures by means of the Scriptures, a principle of interpretation already developed in the interpretation of Homer and extensively employed by Philo of Alexandria. Origen uses the Pauline phrase «comparing spiritual things with spiritual things» (1 Cor 2:13) to legitimate the procedure,³³ but he also sees the practice as a response to Jesus' command to «search the Scriptures» (John 5:39).³⁴ He relates a simile that he heard from a rabbi in which the Scriptures are compared to a house with a large number of locked rooms in which the keys have been mixed up and dispersed. We are able to understand obscure passages of Scripture when we take as a point of departure a similar passage from another portion of Scripture, because «the principle of interpretation has been dispersed among them».³⁵ For example, to explain Cant 2:9, in which the beloved is compared to a gazelle or young stag, Origen assembles all references to these animals in other books of Scripture.³⁶ This procedure of explaining Scripture by Scripture is based on the fundamental premise that the Holy Spirit is the true author of the whole Bible, already mentioned above, and that all that is written are words of the same God.³⁷

These principles and presuppositions became the common heritage of later patristic commentators including Eusebius, Didymus, Cyrill, Ambrose and Augustine, to name but a few. In the second half of the fourth century there developed an ideological split between Alexandria and Antioch led by Diodorus of Tarsus, the teacher of both John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia, who introduced a distinction between *theoria* and *allegoria*, a distinction previously unknown in the exegetical tradition. According to Diodorus, allegory was equivalent to denial of the historical sense of the Scriptures, whereas *theoria* was a higher sense built on the foundation of the literal sense. Referring to Paul's use of the term allegory, he wrote: «Even the apostle did not discard history at any

33 *HomGn* 2,6.

34 *PArch* 4, 3,5.

35 *Philoc* 2,3.

36 *ComCt* 3.

37 *HomEz* 1,4.

point although he could introduce *theoria* and call it allegory [cf. Gal. 4:28]. He was not ignorant of the term but was teaching us that, if the term “allegory” is judged by its conceptual content, it must be taken in the sense of *theoria*, not violating in any way the nature of the historical substance». ³⁸ A little later John Chrysostom in his *Commentary on Galatians* indicated somewhat anachronistically that Paul had used the word allegory improperly for what is actually a prefiguration or *typos*. ³⁹ Such a distinction cannot be found in the earlier tradition and should not obscure the fact that all ancient interpreters were agreed that the Scriptures had a hidden, that is, not literal meaning, whether they called it higher or deeper.

This belief is revealed also in their use of a common terminology to indicate such a meaning, the Greek word *ainittetai*, which means to hint or indicate obscurely. Its root is the same as the word enigma (*aenigma*), defined by some in antiquity as particularly obscure allegory. The word was employed first in Homeric exegesis and precisely to indicate an allegorical meaning. In a manual of interpretation from the first century the writer states: «Homer, we discover is much the same in both epics, not telling disreputable tales of the gods, but giving enigmatic hints (αἰνιττόμενον) by means of the technique we have been studying». ⁴⁰ The «hints» are generally to philosophical allegories. The same terminology can be found in Philo, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Origen, Eusebius, Didymus, Cyrill of Alexandria and the Antiochenes, Diodore, Chrysostom, Theodore and Theodoret. Thus, in commenting on Psalm 2:2 «The kings of the earth presented themselves, and the rulers came together in concert», Diodore has no difficulty in saying that the text is hinting at Herod and Pilate. Similarly, in explaining verse 8 of Psalm 30 (LXX Ps 29:9): «I shall cry to you, Lord, and make my petition to my God», Diodore says that David is hinting at the Father and the Son. Commenting on the phrase «Let them have control over the fishes of the sea» in Gen 1:26, John Chrysostom writes: «Evidently he is already revealing to us at this point some mystery lying hidden. Who are to have control? Quite clearly he has spoken this way to hint at the formation of woman. Do you see how there is nothing in Sacred Scripture which is contained there idly or to no purpose? Instead, even the chance word has treasure stored

38 DIODORE OF TARSUS, *Commentary on the Psalms* 1-51, Preface.

39 JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Commentary on the Letter to the Galatians*, IV, 3-4.

40 HERACLITUS, *Homeric Problems*, ed.-tr. D.A. Russell - D. Konstan (Writings from the Greco-Roman World 140), Atlanta 2005, 9. See also pp. 69-71, (ch. 39, 6, 3).

up in it».⁴¹ The difference in basic assumptions about the nature of Scripture between Origen and Chrysostom is not great.

Much of the content that patristic commentators found in texts of the Old Testament was Christological or at least the texts were read in the light of the New Testament ones. However, there is another source for content that deserves mention, the Greek philosophical tradition. The latter enters into the tradition of Scriptural interpretation in a massive way with Philo of Alexandria, who described Moses as a philosopher and king, a combination clearly reminiscent of Plato.⁴² From now on the best of the philosophical tradition will be found in Sacred Scripture itself and transmitted through exegesis, chiefly of the allegorical type. This take-over, or absorption of philosophy into the interpretation of Scripture was rendered theoretically possible through the notion that Moses had preceded historically all the Greek philosophers, who had actually «borrowed» or found their valid teachings in the Jewish Scriptures. This idea can be found already in several second century Jewish writers such as Eupolemus, Pseudo-Eupolemus, Artapanes, and Aristobulus.⁴³ The idea that Moses preceded and is the font of the philosophers is in turn a transposition of the idea that Homer was the source of the teachings of the philosophers, an idea already used to justify a philosophical exegesis of Homer.⁴⁴ Philo is fully aware of the idea of the «theft» of the Greeks.⁴⁵ This notion is repeated by early Christian writers such as Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria.⁴⁶

41 ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Homilies on Genesis* 1-17, tr. R.C. Hill (FC 74), Washington, D.C. 1986.

42 PHILO, *Mos.*, 2,2, (Plato, *Republic* 7, 473c).

43 See A.J. DROGE, *Homer or Moses?* (Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie 26), Tübingen 1989, 14-35 and J.M.G. BARCLAY, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE - 117 CE)*, Berkeley 1996, 125-158.

44 See in general F. BUFFIÈRE, *Les mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque*, Paris 1956, and more recently L. BRISSON, *How Philosophers Saved Myths. Allegorical Interpretation and Classical Mythology*, tr. by Catharine Tihanyi; Chicago 2004. As the first century manual by Heraclitus states it: «As the originator of all wisdom, Homer has, by using allegory, passed down to his successors the power of drawing from him, piece by piece, all the philosophy he was the first to discover». (34.8). See HERACLITUS, *Homeric Problems*, 62-63.

45 See C. MORESCHINI, *Storia della filosofia patristica*, (Letteratura cristiana antica), Brescia 2004, 68. The idea is found, for example, in *De Somniis* II, 244; *Mut.* 167-168; *Her.* 213-214

46 JUSTIN MARTYR, *Apology* 1,59-60; CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Strom.* 1,150, 1-4; 2,100,3-4; 5,29,3-6.

As is well known, much of Philo's thought was taken over by Origen, but with some significant changes. For Origen, it is not Moses but Solomon who is the philosopher, although he does not give him this title. One reason for this switch is, perhaps, due to the Pauline identification of Moses with the text of the Law in 2 Corinthians, where the face of Moses is said to be covered by a veil. In any case, according to Origen, Solomon is the author of three books, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Canticle, which represent «three general disciplines by which one attains knowledge of the universe».⁴⁷ These, he says, correspond to «what the Greeks call ethics, physics and epoptics, which we can call moral, natural, and contemplative».⁴⁸ Origen opines that in fact the Greeks took these ideas from Solomon, since he lived long before them and gave these teachings through the Spirit of God. The teaching is called «divine philosophy» and the three books of Solomon represent also three stages in the spiritual life, the purification of the soul, the discernment of natural things, and the contemplation of the Godhead. Origen also identifies this triple form of «divine philosophy» with the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Abraham expounds moral philosophy through his obedience. Isaac holds the place of natural philosophy, since he dug wells and explored the depths of things, while Jacob receives the subject of contemplation, «since he was named Israel because of the contemplation of divine things».⁴⁹ This represents a variation on an interpretation of the patriarchs already developed by Philo. In this framework it is possible for Origen to make use of philosophical materials in expounding the books of Solomon, because what is of value in the philosophical tradition comes from Solomon anyway. On the whole Origen is less positive about the philosophical heritage than Philo and his Christian predecessors (Justin, Athenagoras, Clement) and more concerned about the error found in it.⁵⁰ However, he does use the word «philosophise» to

47 English translation from ORIGEN, *An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer, First Principles. Book IV, Prologue to the Commentary on the Song of Songs, Homily XXVII on Numbers*, tr. R.A. Greer, New York 1979, 231.

48 *ComCt, prolog. : Generales disciplinae... tres sunt quas Graeci ethicam, physicam, enopticen appellaverunt; has nos dicere possumus moralem, naturalem, inspectivam*. The final phrase is obviously the comment of Rufinus. *Origenes Werke* 8 (GCS 33), ed. W.A. Bachrens, Leipzig 1925, 75. For «enopticen» read «epopticen». See ORIGÈN, *Commentaire sur le Cantique des Cantiques* (SCh 375-376), ed. L. Brésard - H. Crouzel - M. Borret; Paris 1991-1992, 1:129-131, 2:755.

49 ORIGEN, *An Exhortation to Martyrdom*, 233-235.

50 A.M. MALINGREY, «Philosophia». *Étude d'un groupe de mots dans la littérature grecque* (Études et Commentaires 40), Paris 1961, 163-169.

indicate the allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures.⁵¹ Later Christian writers continued to make use of philosophical categories to expound the content of Scripture. Thus, Ambrose, at the beginning of his explanation of Psalm 36, can make the following programmatic statement:

All Scripture is divine, whether natural, whether mystical, whether moral. In the Book of Genesis you have natural history; there you will find how heaven and earth were made, the sea, the land, and how this world of ours was put together. Mystical matters you will find in the Book of Leviticus; contained there is the whole mystery of priesthood. Morals are treated in Deuteronomy; within its pages human life is shaped in accordance with the precepts of the Law. Hence it is that out of the multitude of books written by Solomon, it would seem that three have been preserved: Ecclesiastes, which speaks of things that are natural; the Song of Songs which is mystical; and Proverbs which is moral.⁵²

Ambrose goes on to explain that these three categories are also found in the book of Psalms, which is to be considered as a single work. The Psalter teaches about nature, about angels and powers, about the sun, the moon and the stars. It also teaches about mystical things, that is hidden things, which include prophecies about the coming of the Son of God, his death and resurrection, and the future transformation of all things. In other words it teaches about the economy of salvation and eschatology. Finally it teaches about morals, about virtues, vices, and the healing of the soul.⁵³ Ambrose asserts that this Psalm (36) in particular abounds in moral teaching (*ethica*). We shall see that the term *ethica* is an important clue to tracing the origin of this conception.⁵⁴

What this comprehensive overview of Scripture means is that all wisdom, human or divine, is to be found in the Scriptures in general and in the Psalms in particular. There is no distinction here between reason and revelation or faith and reason. These relatively modern distinctions are here completely blurred.

51 MALINGREY, «*Philosophia*», 174. *CCels*, 5, 58 (2, 61, 16-17).

52 SAINT AMBROSE, *Commentary on Twelve Psalms*, tr. I.M. Ni Riain, Dublin 2000, 53.

53 *Sancti Ambrosii Opera* 6: *Explanatio psalmorum XII* (CSEL 64), Vindobonae 1919.

54 The term is used by Ambrose also several times in his commentary on Psalm 118. At the beginning of the prologue to this commentary he says that the prophet David sometimes speaks of mystical things, but he is a great master of moral teaching and excels in ethical teaching (*ethica*): 1. *Licet mystice quoque uelut tubae increpauerit sono Dauid propheta, tamen moralium magnus magister, quantum in eo excellat ethica, psalmi huius summa declarat gratia, siquidem cum suavis omnis doctrina moralis sit, tum maxime suauitate carminis et psallendi dulcedine delectat aures animum que demulcet. Sancti Ambrosii Opera* 5: *Expositio psalmi cxviii*, prologus, 1 (CSEL 62), ed. M. Petschenig, Vindobonae 1913.

What is valid in the philosophical tradition is taught in the Scriptures. The categories of «natural, mystical, and moral» (*naturalis uel mystica uel moralis*) come in fact from the Greek philosophical tradition, but Ambrose is asserting that Moses, Solomon and David taught this philosophical content as well as prophecies about the whole economy of salvation long before the Greek philosophers.

We have mentioned earlier the criterion of interpretation employed by Philo and Origen that the meaning of the text must be fitting to God (*theoprepēs*) or worthy of the divine majesty. Although the patristic writers did not have at their disposition the modern tools of historical critical analysis, they did carry out an extensive theological critique of the Scriptures, especially of, but not limited to, the Old Testament. They would not have called it such, but that is, from a modern perspective, what in fact it was. The principal tool used in this critique was an understanding of God, of the divine nature, derived in part from the Greek philosophical tradition as regards the exclusion from the divine nature of anthropomorphic and anthropopathic traits, but also informed by the understanding of God as revealed by Jesus Christ, a chief aspect of which was the divine *philanthropia*. What did not conform to these essential traits had to be excluded from the real meaning of Scripture and the text had to be interpreted so as to provide a meaning that both conformed to the divine nature and was useful.

Two examples may help to illustrate this process. In Deut 7:1-2 the Israelites are commanded to annihilate seven nations in the land into which they are to enter, a command to engage in ethnic cleansing dutifully carried out in the Book of Joshua. But this command was very difficult to reconcile with the divine *philanthropia* revealed by Jesus Christ. In the early fifth century writings of John Cassian, the seven nations are interpreted together with Egypt as a figure for the eight principal vices against which we must all strive.⁵⁵ These we can seek to annihilate without scruple. This interpretation can be found already in Origen's homilies on Joshua.⁵⁶ The text so interpreted not only becomes acceptable, but also a vehicle for useful moral teaching. Another example from Psalm 136(137):9 may serve to illustrate this process. The closing verse of the Psalm expresses the pious wish directed against the Babylonian oppressors: «Happy shall he be who will grab your infants and dash them against the rock». The interpretation of John Cassian reads:

55 JOHN CASSIAN, *Conl.* 5.XVI-XVII.

56 ORIGEN, *HomJos.* passim.

It behooves us as well to destroy the sinners in our land – namely, our fleshly feelings – on the morning of their birth, as they emerge, and, while they are still young, to dash the children of Babylon against the rock. Unless they are killed at a very tender age they will, with our acquiescence, rise up to our harm as stronger adults, and they will certainly not be overcome without great pain and effort.⁵⁷

This interpretation of Ps 136:9 goes back to Origen, who had interpreted the infants of Babylon to mean «confused thoughts caused by evil».⁵⁸ A variant of this interpretation is given by Origen in a homily on Joshua where the rock is interpreted to mean Christ (1 Cor 10:4).⁵⁹ Variants of this interpretation can be found in Eusebius, Hilary, Jerome and Evagrius of Pontus, and in the Rule of St. Benedict. The heads of the children become the *propatheiai* of the Stoic tradition.⁶⁰ Many other such interpretations were necessary in order to make the Psalter into a Christian prayer book.

CONCLUSION

This is by no means a complete exposition of the presuppositions, principles and procedures used in patristic exegesis, but it is sufficient to indicate how different their intellectual world is from ours. Our enhanced historical consciousness, due in part to historical critical methodology developed over several centuries, renders many of these principles and procedures obsolete or inoperative. Those who understand the ancient rules and procedures can still appreciate and profit from the content of the patristic commentaries. However, there are two basic aspects of patristic interpretation that remain important today. The first is the conviction that the word of God in the fullest sense is Jesus Christ. In him alone do we find the fullness of revelation and all the previous writings must be measured in the light of this revelation, of the divine *philanthropia*, God's love for the human race. This fundamental conviction of patristic interpreters is echoed many times in the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Benedict XVI, first of all in the assertion that «the Logos refers in the first place to the eternal Word, the only Son, begotten of the Father before all ages and consubstantial with him». He goes on to note that «while in the Church we greatly venerate the sacred

57 *Inst.* 6.XIII.2.

58 *CCels* 7,22.

59 *HomJos.* 15,3.

60 See my essay: «“First movements” (*propatheiai*) in John Cassian» in this volume, 457-466.

Scriptures, the Christian faith is not a «religion of the book»: Christianity is the «religion of the word of God», not of «a written and mute word, but of the incarnate and living Word».⁶¹

The second aspect of patristic interpretation I wish to stress, which follows from the first, is the necessity of a theological critique of the Scriptures. The original historical meaning of the texts is not enough, especially in an era of rising fundamentalist reading even among Catholics. We must always ask how they can be understood by Christians and that involves theology, that is, the discourse about the nature of God.

61 BENEDICT XVI, *Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini* 7, 17-18.

PART II
TO THE RHONE

MODELS AND IMAGES OF SPIRITUAL PROGRESS IN THE WORKS OF JOHN CASSIAN¹

As a good pedagogue, John Cassian made use of many vivid images to communicate the ideal of the spiritual life that he was proposing to his readers. Some of these images can also be regarded as models² for those seeking spiritual progress. It is the aim of this article to examine Cassian's notion of spiritual progress in the light of some of these images and models.³ It may be useful to stress that all of the images examined here depend on the contrast, fundamental to Cassian's thought as well as to the previous monastic tradition, between the interior and the exterior life, a contrast that will be developed in the course of this article.

1. THE AMBIDEXTROUS MAN

In the sixth of his *Conferences of the Fathers*, dedicated to the subject of the death of the saints, John Cassian has his interlocutor, Abbot Theodore, refer to Aoth (Ehud in Hebrew), who, according to the Book of Judges, «used either hand as

1 This essay was originally published in *Spiritual Progress. Studies in the Spirituality of Late Antiquity and Early Monasticism*, ed. J. Driscoll - M. Sheridan (SA 115), Rome 1994.

2 The word «model» is being used here in the sense of an ideal to be striven for, something on which one can model oneself. Basil, in his letter to Gregory of Nazianzus (*Letter 2, 3*), had discussed the problem of fantasies that arise in the mind and had suggested the need to create icons in the mind in order to combat the fantasies. He noted that painters use models at which they look continuously in an effort to transfer the characteristics to their own work. In the same way, he says, those who seek to achieve perfection should constantly fix their gaze on the lives of the saints, images (εἰκόνα) that move and act, in an effort to acquire their characteristics. This is precisely the kind of image that Cassian is seeking to produce. It is possible that Cassian was influenced by Basil's letter. For the Greek text with English translation, see SAINT BASIL, *The Letters* (LCL 190), tr. R.J. Deferrari, New York 1924, 7-24.

3 The works of Cassian under consideration here are the *Institutes* (*Instituta coenobiorum*) in twelve books and the *Conferences* (*Conlationes Patrum*) of which there are twenty-four. For the Latin text of these works, see JOHANNES CASSIANUS, *De Institutis Coenobiorum et de Octo Principalium Vitiorum Remediis*, ed. M. Petschenig (CSEL 17), Vienna 1888 and JOHANNES CASSIANUS, *Conlationes*, ed. M. Petschenig (CSEL 13), Vindobonae 1886. A slightly revised Latin text may also be found in JEAN CASSIEN, *Institutions cénobitiques*, ed. J.-C. Guy (Sch 109), Paris 1965 and JEAN CASSIEN, *Conférences*, ed. E. Pichery (Sch 42, 54, 64), Paris 1955-59.

if it were his right hand» (Judg 3:15).⁴ Aoth represents for Cassian those perfect men who «are referred to in Holy Scripture as ἀμφοτεροδέξιοι - that is, as ambidextrous».⁵ Cassian had already cited several times the affirmation of Paul that «for those who love God everything works together for the good» (Rom 8:28). The figure of Aoth offers Cassian the opportunity to develop this Pauline theme as a fundamental principle of the spiritual life:

We shall also be able to possess this quality in a spiritual way if by a good and correct use we put the things which are considered fortunate and right-handed and the things which are called unfortunate and left-handed on the right side, so that whatever befalls may become for us, in the words of the Apostle, «the arms of righteousness». For we see that our inner man consists in two parts or, as I might say, two hands. No holy person can be without what we call the left hand, but perfect virtue is discerned in the fact that by proper use he turns both into a right hand.⁶

4 The translations of scriptural texts given here will generally be of the text as cited by Cassian in Latin. This is often but not always the same as the Vulgate.

5 Cassian cites the Greek term with a Latin equivalent: «ἀμφοτεροδέξιοι, *id est ambidextri, nuncupantur*». The word *ambidexter* is not found in the Vulgate and the Greek word occurs only twice in the Septuagint: Judg 3:15 and 20:16. The Latin word is found, however, in Jerome's translation of Origen's homilies on the Psalms, which could be the source for Cassian's use of it, even though the explanation given there is different from that proposed by Cassian. For the text of Jerome's translation (ἀμφοτεροδέξιος *scribitur, id est, utramque manum dexteram habens, quem nos latine ambidextrum possumus dicere*), see: JEROME, *S. Hieronymi presbyteri Opera, Pars II, Opera homiletica. Tractatus siue homiliae in Psalmos*, ed. G. MORIN (CCL 78), Turnhout 1958, 378. For the attribution of these homilies to Origen, see V. PERI, *Omelie origeniane sui Salmi. Contributo all'identificazione del testo latino* (Studi e Testi 289), Città del Vaticano 1980.

6 *Conl.* 6.X.1. A previous interpretation of Aoth in a spiritual/allegorical sense, though not exactly the same as that of Cassian, had already been given by Origen, *HomJd* 3,5: *nihil habet in se sinistrum, sed utramque manum dextram habet; hoc est enim, quod dicitur «ambidexter». Dignus vere populi princeps et ecclesiae iudex, qui nihil agit sinistrum, cuius, quod agit dextera, nesciat sinistra, in utraque parte dexter est, in fide dexter est, in actibus dexter est, nihil habet de illis, qui collocantur «a sinistris» ... puto quod secundum spiritalem intelligentiam et sancti omnes «ambidextri» dicantur* (Origenes Werke 7. *Homilien zu Hexateuch in Rufins Übersetzung*, ed. W. A. Bachrens (GCS 30), Leipzig 1921, 485-486. A similar interpretation is found in Origen's homily on Ps 15 (see previous note). The widespread use of the left hand in antiquity to represent all that is bad or unfavorable is reflected in the judgement scene in Matt 25:33,41. The idea survives in the English word «sinister» which is the Latin word for «left». The English citations of Cassian are from: JOHN CASSIAN, *The Conferences*, tr. B. Ramsey (ACW 57), New York 1997 and JOHN CASSIAN, *The Institutes*, tr. B. Ramsey (ACW 58), New York 2000.

Thus there opens up a perspective of unlimited spiritual progress in this life, in which everything, every experience, whether positive or negative from the external point of view, becomes for the spiritually ambidextrous person the occasion for spiritual or interior growth.⁷ For Cassian the preeminent example of the ambidextrous man is the Apostle Paul to whom we shall have occasion to return later.

It would be rather easy to sketch out in the abstract the course of spiritual progress according to the vision of Cassian. It includes the already traditional elements of the struggle against the vices, the conquest of the passions, the acquisition of virtues and the expansion of charity to the point that contemplative life becomes possible.⁸ Here, however, the discussion will be limited to some of the images through which this ideal of spiritual progress is being communicated.

It should be emphasized that for Cassian the validity of this very optimistic perspective does not depend on whether or not it represents the experience of the majority.⁹ On the one hand, Cassian is an optimist with regard to the theoretical possibilities for spiritual progress. On the other hand, with regard to the concrete social reality, it could be said that he is somewhat pessimistic (at least from our point of view). For example, speaking of older monks, he writes:

For there are some - and, more's the pity, they are the majority - who have grown old in the lukewarmness and idleness that they learned in their youth and who claim authority for themselves based not on their mature behavior but on their many years.¹⁰

7 An interesting parallel to this ideal, without the term «ambidextrous» but with reference to the right and the left, can be found in Discourse 26 of Gregory Nazianzen. See GRÉGOIRE DE NAZIANZE, *Discours 24-26*; ed. J. Mossay (SCh 284), Paris 1981, 248-249.

8 This has been done often enough. The reader may consult: O. CHADWICK, *John Cassian. A Study in Primitive Monasticism*, Cambridge 1968; O. CHADWICK, «Cassianus, Johannes», in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 7, Berlin/New York 1981, 650-657; M. OLPHE-GALLIARD, «Cassien (Jean)», in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 2, Paris 1953, 214-276; M. CAPPUYNS, «Cassien (Jean)», in *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques* 11, Paris 1949, 1319-1348.

9 At the same time it should be noted that experience plays a very important role in Cassian's thinking. He emphasizes that one cannot understand many aspects of the spiritual life without experience. Experience is essential for making progress and is in fact the great teacher. For the phrase *experientia magistra*, see *Conl.* 3.VII.4; 10.XI.6; 12.IV.1; 12.XVI.3; 19.VII.1.

10 *Conl.* 2.XIII.2

In a similarly pessimistic vein, speaking toward the end of the *Institutes* about the spiritual pride by which the more perfect are assaulted, he says:

There are not many who know or experience this kind of pride, because there are not many who strive to lay hold of perfect purity of heart, such that they can arrive at this level of battle; not have they acquired the purgation of the vices whose nature and remedies we have discussed in each book.¹¹

Here Cassian is reflecting the observations of the New Testament¹² as well as his own personal experience. Nevertheless, for those who respond to the grace of God, who take to heart the task of purging themselves, there is no limit to the spiritual progress possible. In the final conference there breathes an air of extraordinary optimism with regard to the possibility of reaching happiness «with the tribulations of this world and with the greatest anguish of suffering».¹³ The unalterable tranquillity attributed to the ambidextrous man in the sixth Conference is neither a «lazy calm» nor a «silly joy».¹⁴

Everything depends, however, on becoming aware that our spiritual progress does not depend on the exterior world but that instead the kingdom of God is to be realized within ourselves. This brings us to another key image at the base of Cassian's vision, that between the interior and the exterior man.

2. THE INTERIOR MAN

At the beginning of the first book of the *Institutes* Cassian proposes to speak first of the monk's clothing, saying: «After having exposed their outward appearance to view we shall then be able to discuss, in logical sequence, their inner worship (*interiorem cultum*)».¹⁵

In the second book, dedicated to the form of prayer of the monks, he says that it is necessary to speak briefly on the subject of the quality and of the continuity of the prayer, although a more ample treatment will be postponed for the *Conferences* of the Fathers. In this way, Cassian explains, «once we have sketched the activity of the outer man and as it were laid a kind of foundation

11 *Inst.* 12.XXIV.1

12 See also: *Inst.* 4.XXXVIII.1 citing: Matt 7:14; Matt 20:16; Luke 12:32) and *Conl.* 3.VII.7, where the case of Israel is cited: of the 603,000 who left Egypt (Exod 38:25), only two entered the promised land (Num 14:38).

13 *Conl.* 24.XXVI.12.

14 *Conl.* 6.IX.3; *Conl.* 24.XXVI.13.

15 *Inst.* 1.I.1

for prayer», it will be possible later on to succeed with less labor in reaching the highest summits of prayer.¹⁶ At the end of the same chapter he explains that the present work that he is engaged in writing «will be better suited to the behavior of the outer man and to the teaching of the cenobia, whereas the others (the *Conferences*) will pertain rather to the discipline of the inner man and perfection of heart, and to the life and teaching of the anchorites».¹⁷

This contrast and the juxtaposition of «outer man» with «the teaching of the cenobia» and of the «inner man» with the «life and teaching of the anchorites» is found also in the Preface to the *Conferences* where Cassian explains that the conferences that he is reporting are by the anchorites who dwell in the hermitages of Scete. He says, moreover, that «the anchoritic and contemplative life, of which these incomparable men make profession», is rather superior to the cenobitic and ascetic (*actualis*) life that is practiced in the communities. To explain the connection between his two works (the *Institutes* and the *Conferences*), he writes:

Consequently, let us proceed from the external and visible life of the monks, which we have summarized in the previous books, to the invisible character of the inner man, and from the practice of the canonical prayers let our discourse arise to the unceasing nature of that perpetual prayer which the Apostle commands. Thus the person who has read the previous work and is worthy of the name of that spiritual Jacob because of the supplanting of the carnal vices may now - taking up not so much my own institutes as those of the fathers and passing over to the deserts and as it were the dignity of Israel, thanks to an insight into the divine purity - be also similarly taught what must be observed at this summit of perfection.¹⁸

Thus we find the cenobitic and ascetic life juxtaposed with the exterior and visible aspect represented by Jacob, and the anchoritic and contemplative life with the interior and invisible life represented by the name Israel. The termi-

16 *Inst.* 2.IX.1.

17 *Inst.* 2.IX.3.

18 *Concl. praef.* I.1. Rousseau suggests that the important distinction here is not between «outer» and «inner» but between «way of life» and «cast of mind» (*cultus* and *habitus*). We can certainly agree with him that «outer» and «inner» do not refer to two distinct groups of people but he does not seem to have noticed the exact parallel with the language in *Inst.* 1.I.1, surely not accidental, where *habitus* and *cultus* have the opposite reference of exterior (*habitus* here = clothing) and interior (*cultus*). This suggests that the important distinction really is exterior and interior. See P. ROUSSEAU, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian*, Oxford 1978, 178.

nology of «outer man» and «inner man» is clearly of Pauline inspiration.¹⁹ Cassian makes reference several times to the Pauline texts of Rom 7:22 and Eph 3:16. The terminology of Jacob/Israel (with the accompanying allegorical interpretation) has a more complicated history which goes back at least to Philo of Alexandria. To this we will return later. Now it is necessary to make more precise what Cassian intends by using the Pauline terminology.

At first sight it seems a little strange to distinguish between the matter of the *Institutes* and that of the *Conferences* in terms of the «outer man» and the «inner man». In the *Institutes* there is discussion not only of obviously external things such as monastic dress and the structure of the canonical hours but above all of the eight principal vices, such as vainglory and pride, things which have to do with the interior man. Actually the *Institutes* deal principally with the relationship between the outer and the inner man. Indeed, one could say that the goal of the struggle against the vices is the liberation of the inner man.

Cassian emphasizes that it is not enough to dominate the outer man. The person, for example, subject to the vice of gluttony is not in a position to maintain the struggles of the inner man.²⁰ He is far too occupied with the desires or pleasures of the palate. But it will not be enough to dominate these desires of the outer man. Cassian explains:

For it is not the corruptible flesh but rather the pure heart that is made a dwelling for God and a temple of the Holy Spirit. While the outer man fasts, then, it behooves the inner one as well to abstain from harmful foods and, in particular, to make himself pure for God so that he may deserve to welcome Christ in himself as his guest, as the blessed Apostle teaches in these words: «May Christ», he says, «dwell in the inner man through faith in your hearts» (Eph 3:16-17).²¹

19 This terminology is used extensively also by Origen especially in reference to the double account of creation. According to Origen, it is the interior man, not the exterior, that is made in the image and likeness of God. Cf. *HomGn* 13,15; *ComCt, praef.* (GCS 8, 63-67); *ComRm* 1,19;2,13. For additional references, see A. SOLIGNAC, «Homme intérieur», in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 7, Paris 1969, 654 and C. MARKSHIES, «Innere Mensch», in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 18, Stuttgart 1998, 266-312. Origen also made a connection between the interior man and the etymology of the name Israel as meaning «one who sees God». See *HomLev* 14,3. See also *HomNum* 24,2 where the connection is made between the interior man and the kingdom of God within.

20 *Inst.* 5:XIII.1.

21 *Inst.* 5:XXI.5. The harmful foods that must be denied to the interior man are slander, anger, envy, vainglory, lust and the wanderings of an unstable heart.

In a similar way, following the gospel precept: «If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven» (Matt 19:21), Cassian insists on the necessity of renouncing riches, but at the same time he is aware also of the observations of Paul with regard to renunciation where charity is lacking. Citing and paraphrasing Paul, he continues:

... if I am impatient, or angry or envious or proud or inflamed by others' insults, or if I seek what is my own or think what is evil or do not bear patiently and willingly all the things that could be inflicted upon me, the renunciation and the burning up of the outer man will be of no value to me interiorly if I am still involved in my former vices.²²

A purely external renunciation of riches is of no use. The riches that are an obstacle to spiritual progress, to the development of the inner man, are not principally the external and material riches but «the harmful characteristics of a vicious heart». In the following chapter he adds that it is precisely these riches that are really ours, that «always clinging to body and soul». «We should make every effort, the, so that our inner man too may reject and dispose of all the wealth of the vices that he has accumulated in his former way of life».²³

In the second part of the *Conferences* Cassian returns to the same idea in a different context. Abbot Joseph observes: «Our Lord and Savior instructed us thoroughly in the virtue of patience and mildness - that is, so that we would not promote it by mere lip service but would lay it up in the deepest recesses of our soul». To illustrate this idea he cites the command that is found in the Sermon on the Mount, «if anyone strikes you on your right cheek, offer him the other as well» (Matt 5:39). Joseph explains that the word «other» must be understood to mean the «other right one» and then he offers an allegorical explanation of the phrase:

(Without doubt one on the right is to be understood, and this other right one cannot be understood except as being, in my estimation, on the face of the inner man.) In so doing he desired to remove completely the dregs of wrath from the inmost depths of the soul. Thus, if your outer right cheek has received a blow from the striker, the inner man should offer his right cheek to be struck as well

22 *Conl.* 3.VII.10-11. Cf. 1 Cor 13:4-7.

23 *Conl.* 3.VIII.1. Cassian dwells on this subject at some length distinguishing between these false riches of vice and the true riches of virtue. In the following chapter (9), he also distinguishes three senses (bad, good, and indifferent) in which the term «riches» is found in the Scriptures.

in humble accord, suffering along with the outer man and as it were submitting and subjecting its own body to the injustice of the striker, so that the inner man may not be disturbed even silently within itself at the blow dealt the outer man.

Abbot Joseph concludes with the observation that evangelical perfection teaches us «that patience must be observed not by words but by the inner tranquillity of the heart».²⁴

Cassian also wishes to make us understand that no external wall of defense, no fence of daily life is capable of defending us against the attacks of the enemy, against the danger of losing our interior peace. Rather it is necessary to be convinced that we will never be secure, Cassian says, «if we place all the defense of our patience and all our confidence not in the strength of our inner man but in the recesses of our cell or in the remoteness of the desert or the companionship of holy person or the defense of something that is outside ourselves».²⁵

3. THE SPIRITUAL CENTURION

Cassian had already developed the idea of the «sturdiness of the inner man» in the seventh Conference where he introduces the image of the «spiritual centurion». The inner man is urged to seek promotion to the rank of «spiritual centurion». This image depends on the use and allegorical interpretation of several scriptural passages. It derives first of all from the story of the centurion of the gospel who makes an appeal to Jesus on the grounds that he also knows how to command (Matt 8:9). With this as a point of departure, Cassian suggests that we too can be promoted to the rank of spiritual centurion: «If we also, struggling manfully against disturbances (*perturbationes*) and vices, are able to subject them to our authority and discretion and, warring in our flesh, can extinguish our passions, subjugate the unstable cohort of our thoughts to the rule of reason, and by the saving standard of the Lord's cross drive out the fearful troops of the opposing powers...». These are the struggles of the interior man (*interioris hominis pugnas*) to which Cassian makes frequent reference elsewhere. To rein-

24 *Conl.* 16.XXII.2-3. This unusual explanation appears to be based on the implicit principle of *defectus litterae*, a principle developed most explicitly by Origen, according to which there are certain irrational or impossible things placed in the Scriptures in order to make us look for a spiritual or allegorical sense. Origen did in fact give this text as an example of such a case but for a different reason: that a person striking with the right hand would normally strike the left cheek (!). See *PArch* 4,3,3. H. CROUZEL - M. SIMONETTI, *Origène. Traité des Principes. Tome III* (SCh 268), Paris 1980, 353.

25 *Conl.* 18.XVI.1. See also *Conl.* 24.IV.3

force this allegorical interpretation, he makes an appeal to another allegorical interpretation. The spiritual centurion, he says, «was mystically designated by Moses in Exodus: “Establish for yourself χιλιάρχους, and centurions, and rulers of fifties and tens”» (Exod 18:21).²⁶

Actually Cassian develops the image of the spiritual centurion by means of a series of texts in which Paul had already introduced allegorized military imagery to describe the Christian life. The principal text is 2 Cor 10:4: «The weapons of our military service are not of flesh but are powerful because of God».²⁷

The spiritual centurion is then armed with the shield of the faith (Eph 6:16), and the breastplate of love (1 Thes 5:8), which «does not permit the devil's missiles to penetrate to our inner man». He also has «as a helmet the hope of salvation» (1 Thes 5:8) and «the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God» (Eph 6:17). Using the traditional patristic hermeneutical procedure of interpreting the Scriptures by means of the Scriptures, Cassian expands the idea of the spiritual sword with the help of the text of the letter to the Hebrews: «it is sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the divisions of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart» (Heb 4:12). Thus he introduces the idea of self-knowledge. Lest anyone should think that the centurion is strong because he relies upon his own strength, Cassian explains that «the Lord's battles can only be fought by the suffering and the weak». Here also Paul, «our gospel centurion», is the model, since he said: «When I am weak, then I am strong» (2 Cor 12:10), and «Strength is perfected in weakness» (2 Cor 12:9).

The real causes then of our spiritual diseases are interior just as the real struggles are the interior ones. And the real riches of which we must rid ourselves are the interior ones. On the other hand, it is possible to establish a balance (or virtue) in the inner man without being able to dominate completely the outer man. Here Cassian relies upon a traditional interpretation of the observation of Paul in the letter to the Romans: «I delight in the law of God according to the inner man, but I see another law in my members at war with the law in my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that is in my members» (Rom 7:22-23).²⁸

26 *Conl.* 7.V.1-2.

27 On the Stoic background of this kind of allegorized military imagery see: A.J. MALHERBE, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers*, Minneapolis 1989, 91ff.

28 *Conl.* 22.XIV.1 - 23.I.1.

At the same time it must be observed that, although it is rather difficult for the inner man to dominate completely the outer man, nevertheless the condition of the inner man is often revealed through the behavior of the outer man, or through what is called in modern psychological jargon «body language». As Cassian observes regarding spiritual disease, «its existence within is recognizable from the behavior of the outer man».²⁹

This observation is made more concrete in a famous satire on the proud man whose behavior Cassian describes thus:

Instead of producing salutary sighs he will clear his dry throat and incessantly bring up phlegm; he will play with his fingers, fiddling with them and tracing with them as if he were writing; and all the members of his body will be so agitated for as long as the spiritual conference continues that he will give the impression of being utterly at the mercy of swarming worms or sharp thorns.³⁰

4. THE INTERIOR EDIFICE

Before leaving the subject of the inner man, it is necessary to mention another image that Cassian invokes in this context, that is, the interior edifice (*domus interior*). He does not say precisely that the interior edifice is constructed within the inner man, for this would be to mix metaphors. But he does use the vocabulary of interior/exterior. Speaking of the virtue of discretion, he says that in «this virtue are included wisdom as well as intellect and judgement, without which it is impossible to construct our interior edifice or amass spiritual riches, according to a divine saying that goes thus: “With wisdom a dwelling is built, and with knowledge it is set up again; with understanding its cellars are filled with all precious riches and good things” » (Prov 24:3-4).³¹

In his final conference he takes up the metaphor again in a more elaborate way, comparing the monk to a person who «wanted to construct a barrel-vaulted ceiling: He would have to trace a circle from its precise center all the way around».³² This point is for Cassian the love of God, the fixed center around which the monk must make all his works revolve. Otherwise «he will never build with proven skill the structure of the spiritual edifice whose architect is

29 *Inst.* 12.XXIX.2.

30 *Inst.* 12.XXVII.3.

31 *Conl.* 2.IV.2. The Latin text does not correspond to that of the Vulgate.

32 *Conl.* 24.VI.1.

Paul». Instead that monk «will foolishly erect in his heart an ugly and unworthy house for the Holy Spirit, and one that will collapse time and again...».³³

5. THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Although the phrase «inner man» is undoubtedly of Pauline inspiration, Paul is not the only source for this key idea. The saying found in the Gospel of Luke, «the kingdom of God is within you» (Luke 17:21) is equally if not more important. According to Cassian, the essence of the spiritual life is located in the depth of the soul (*animae recessu*). «In our inmost depth there can be only one situation, either knowledge or ignorance of the truth; either love of vice or of virtue». Then he cites Paul: «For the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit» (Rom 14:17). Cassian concludes:

Thus, if the kingdom of God is within us, and the kingdom of God is itself righteousness and peace and joy, then whoever abides in these things is undoubtedly in the kingdom of God. And on the contrary, those who are involved in unrighteousness and discord and the sadness that produces death are dwelling in the kingdom of the devil and in hell and death.³⁴

The idea of the «kingdom of God within us» offers Cassian also the basis for another distinction, that of the *scopos/destinatio* and the *telos/finis* of the spiritual life. Cassian explains: «The end of our profession, as we have said, is the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven; but the goal or *scopos* is purity of heart, without which it is impossible for anyone to reach that end».³⁵

This phrase «the goal» in English translates the Latin phrase *destinatio vero, id est scopos*. To distinguish the end (*finis*) from the «scopos» (a Greek word already latinized) Cassian had previously offered several examples: that of the peasant who has the ultimate goal of living in tranquil comfort, but to reach that goal he must free his field from thorns and weeds. Then there is the merchant who, to increase his capital, does not cease to amass merchandise. However, for Cassian, the terminology is clearly of Pauline origin. Inspired by the text that he will cite later, Cassian introduces another example, which he develops at length,

33 *Conl.* 24.VI.3; the phrase *sapiens architectus* (1 Cor 3:10, borrowed by Paul from Isa 3:3 and applied to himself) is used of Paul already by Tertullian; see F. COCCHINI, *Il Paolo di Origene* (Verba Seniorum N.S. 11), Rome 1992. It is found frequently also in Augustine and Jerome.

34 *Conl.* 1.XIII.2-3.

35 *Conl.* 1.IV.3.

that of the archer, who, to obtain the prize, must aim at the target. Then he cites Paul saying: «When he was teaching us about our immediate goal the same blessed Apostle significantly used the very term “scopos” when he said: “Forgetting what is behind, but reaching out to what is ahead, I press on to the goal (Latin: *bravium*), to the prize of the heavenly calling of the Lord”». Cassian insists that the Greek text is clearer and cites it also «κατὰ σκοπὸν διώκω».³⁶ Then he adds a paraphrase: «It is just as if he had said: By way of this goal I forget what is behind - namely, the vices of my earlier life - and I strive to attain to the end, which is the heavenly prize». It must be added, however, to avoid misunderstanding, that this heavenly reward can be obtained already in this world, according to Cassian. The kingdom of God is within us.

Whoever does not keep his gaze fixed on the target (*scopos*), which is purity of heart, is in great danger. «It is inevitable», says Cassian, «that the mind which does not have a place to turn to or any stable base will undergo change from hour to hour and from minute to minute due to the variety of its distractions, and by the things that come to it from outside it will be continually transformed into whatever occurs to it at any given moment».³⁷

This target is called purity of heart because it means the elimination of vices and the movements of passion.³⁸ The practice of the other virtues is to make our heart pure and preserve it «untouched by any harmful passion, and so that by taking these steps (*istis gradibus*) we may be able to ascend to the perfection of love».³⁹ From a positive point of view, the target is charity, the love that cannot live together with the vices, with anger, pride, with contempt for a brother. Cassian's vision is very clear. All the other practices, fasting, vigils, withdrawal from the company of others, the recitation of the Scriptures, must be exercised in subordination to the principal virtue, that is, purity of heart or love. Cassian writes:

... rather than for their sake to neglect this principal virtue which, as long as it remains integral and intact, will prevent anything bad from happening to us whenever one of the things that are secondary has to be omitted out of necessity. For it will be of no use to have fulfilled everything if this primary object, for the sake of attaining which all things are to be pursued, has been lost.⁴⁰

36 *Conl.* 1.V.4. Phil 3:14.

37 *Conl.* 1.V.4.

38 *Conl.* 1.VI.3.

39 *Conl.* 1.VII.1

40 *Conl.* 1.VII.2.

This terminology of *scopos/finis* is complemented later in the fourteenth Conference with the more traditional terminology of «active and contemplative life».⁴¹ But here also Cassian prefers the Greek terminology. He writes:

Its knowledge is in fact twofold. The first kind is *πρακτική*, or practical, which reaches its fulfillment in correction of behavior and in cleansing from vice. The other is *θεωρητική*, which consists in the contemplation of divine things and in the understanding of most sacred meanings.⁴²

This is the terminology found in Evagrius of Pontus and, in general, Cassian's teaching is the same as that of Evagrius. In Cassian's writings, however, the technical term *ἀπάθεια* is missing, a term that had become the object of controversy principally because of the intemperate attacks of Jerome.⁴³

Cassian has prudently abandoned this term in favor of the gospel phrase «purity of heart» (Matt 5:8).⁴⁴ When using this terminology of *πρακτική* and *θεωρητική*, Cassian is equally clear with regard to the way to spiritual progress. He writes:

41 «Active» here is not equivalent to «apostolic» or active in the sense of performing good works. See M. OLPHE-GALLIARD, «Vie contemplative et vie active d'après Cassien», *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique* 16 (1935) 252-288.

42 *Conl.* 14.I.3. The word rendered here as “practical” (a transliteration of the Greek) is in fact the Latin *actualis*. Cassian does not use the adjective *actiua* but rather *actualis* to designate this first phase of the spiritual life. Augustine, on the other hand, uses *uita actiua* (e.g. *Civ.* 8,4). On the complex history of this terminology, which lies outside the scope of this article, one may consult: EVAGRE LE PONTIQUE, *Traité pratique*, ed. A. Guillaumont - C. Guillaumont (SCh 170) Paris 1971, 38-63.

43 See *Epist.* 133,3, (CSEL 56) 246, where Jerome suggests that the term as used by Evagrius must mean that one becomes either like a stone or like a God. Jerome assumes that the term is of Stoic origin and is equivalent to the idea of sinlessness which he attributes to Pelagius. See also Augustine, *Civ.* 14,9. For the history of this terminology, see S. LILLA, «Apatheia», in *Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiane*, Casal Monferrato 1983, 265-266; G. BARDY, «Apatheia», in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 1, Paris 1937, 727-746; P. DE LABRIOLLE, «Apatheia», in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 1, Stuttgart 1950, 484-487; M.-P. ENGELMEIER, «Apathie», in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Basel-Stuttgart 1971, 429-433. See the essay «The Controversy over ἀπάθεια», in this volume, 335-363.

44 It is not a question of substitution. The phrase «purity of heart» was already firmly established in the monastic tradition (see, for example, the Coptic Life of Pachomius or the letters of Evagrius) because of the promise that the pure of heart should see God (Matt 5:8), that is, enjoy the contemplative life. Thus this beatitude could be used as a sort of shorthand for the whole program of the spiritual life just as could the names Jacob and Israel (see the following section). On Cassian's use of the phrase, see M. OLPHE-GALLIARD, «La pureté de coeur d'après Cassien», *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique* 17 (1936) 28-60.

Whoever, therefore, wishes to attain to the θεωρητική must first pursue practical knowledge with all his strength and power (*ut omni studio atque uirtute*). For the πρακτική can be possessed without the theoretical, but the theoretical can never be seized without the practical. For certain steps have been arranged and distinguished in such a way that human lowliness can mount to the sublime. If these follow one another according to the method that we have mentioned, a person can attain to a height to which he cannot fly if the first step has not been taken. In vain, therefore, does someone who does not reject the contagion of vice strive for the vision of God. «For the Spirit of God hates deception, and it does not dwell in a body subject to sin» (Wis 1:4-5).⁴⁵

The terminology is different but the teaching is the same as that which we found in the first Conference.

6. JACOB/ISRAEL

This fundamental teaching, so well orchestrated and concretely developed both in the works of Evagrius and with the Pauline terminology of Cassian, is in fact very traditional. It is contained also in the now traditional allegorical interpretation of the names Jacob and Israel already used by Cassian in the Preface to the *Conferences* cited earlier. There he constructed a parallelism between the cenobitic and ascetic life with its exterior aspect represented by Jacob and the anchoritic and contemplative life with the interior and invisible life represented by the name Israel. This allegorical interpretation, based on the etymology of Israel as «he who sees God», goes back at least to Philo of Alexandria, who explains that «he who loves knowledge thinks that it is necessary to leave the country of sensation, which has the name of Harran». Then he states that Jacob left Harran at the age of seventy-five and, after having explained the significance of the number, continues

Under the head of this principle is classed the Trainer of self still at his exercises (ἀσκητής), not yet qualified to carry off the prize of complete victory; for we read, «the full number of souls sprung from Jacob was five and seventy» (Exod 1:5): for the offspring of the champion who does not make havoc of the truly holy contest for the winning of virtue, are not bodies but souls, souls from which the irrational element has not yet been eliminated, and which still have sense-perception's gang hanging on to them. For «Jacob» is a name belonging to one wrestling, and preparing for the arena, and tripping up his adversary, not of one

⁴⁵ *Conl.* 14.II.1.

who has won the victory. But when, now deemed capable of seeing God, he shall have received the new name of «Israel»⁴⁶

This interpretation, found also in Clement of Alexandria, Origen and in the letters of Antony,⁴⁷ is evidence of the wide diffusion of this vision of the possibility of spiritual progress. Cassian himself takes up the terminology again in his twelfth Conference where he expands the interpretation with a chain of other allegorical interpretations. With reference to the text of Gen 32:28, he says: «Whoever, therefore, passes beyond the degree of that spiritual Jacob - that is, the supplanter - will mount by the steady inclination of his heart from the struggle of abstinence and from the supplanting of the vices to the dignity of Israel, once the nerve in his thigh has been numbed».⁴⁸

Cassian asserts that David also distinguished these two moments in the life of the spirit. He cites the first part of the first verse of Psalm 75: «God is known in Judea,» explaining that the verse means «in the soul that is still held under the confession of sin, since Judah means confession». Then he explains that «“in Israel” - that is, in the one who sees God or, as some people interpret it, God’s most righteous one - he is not only known but also “his name is great”» that is, the second part of the psalm verse. Then he passes to the second verse of the psalm: «His place is in peace» and comments: «that is, not in the struggle of conflict and in the battle of vice but rather in the peace of chastity and in perpetual tranquillity of heart».⁴⁹

Then with the aid of another psalm Cassian tries to develop the perspective of spiritual progress. He says that the person that has penetrated into this dwelling of peace, that is, the one spoken of in Psalm 75 «proceeding from this degree he will become a spiritual Zion». Zion signifies tower and observatory of God.⁵⁰ Whoever reaches this degree becomes a dwelling place of God. Cas-

46 *Migr.* 199-201; for the translation see: *Philo* 4, ed. F.H. Colson - G.H. Whitaker (LCL 261), Cambridge, Mass. 1932, 248. For other references in Philo, see also *Leg.* I, 61; II, 89; III, 15, 93, 180; Jacob is called an athlete and an ascetic: *Leg.* III, 93; *Sacr.* 4.

47 CLEMENT, *Paed.* I, 57, 1; *Strom.* I, 5, 31; ORIGEN: *ComJn* I, 260; *HomGn* 15, 4; *ComCt*, *praef.*; ANTONY, *Letter* 6, 1. See P.-M. GUILLAUME, «Jacob. Le judaïsme. Les Pères de l’Église», in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 8, Paris 1974, 5-16.

48 *Conl.* 12.XI.2.

49 *Conl.* 12.XI.3. See the similar explanation in Origen’s homily on Ps 75 (*locus Dei non est, nisi in anima quae pacem habet*), CCL 78, 50.

50 This etymology is also found in Origen’s homily on Ps 75. For other references, see F. WUTZ, *Onomastica sacra. Untersuchungen zum Liber interpretationis nominum hebraicorum des hl. Hieronymus* 1-2 (TU 3, 11), Leipzig 1914-1915, 941.

sian explains that «the Lord's place is not in the battle of abstinence but in the peace of chastity, so that his dwelling is in the observation and contemplation of virtue». It is for this reason, he says, that the psalmist said: «the Lord loves the gates of Zion above all the tents of Jacob» (Ps 86:2). This interpretation is obviously based on the hermeneutical principle of the interpretation of Scripture by means of the Scriptures, as we have had occasion to note previously, and on the idea that a word can have the same meaning everywhere in the Scriptures, above all if it is a question of an etymology.⁵¹ In this case the hook word is clearly the name Jacob. This interpretation of the name Israel by means of the name Zion, also interpreted allegorically, is a perfect example of that kind of interpretation called «*tropologia*» in the fourteenth Conference, that is, «moral explanation pertaining to correction of life and to practical (*actualem*) instruction».⁵² It is necessary to interpret, says Cassian, «Jerusalem or Zion as the soul of the human being, according to the words: "Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion"» (Ps 147:12).⁵³

7. CENOBITIC LIFE/EREMITICAL LIFE

We have noted earlier the parallelism constructed by Cassian between the cenobitic and ascetic life with the first phase of the spiritual itinerary symbolized by Jacob and the contemplative and anchoritic life with the second phase symbolized by the name Israel. It is sometimes suggested that Cassian changed his ideas in the course of the composition of the *Conferences* or that one can detect a certain evolution of his thought with regard to the division of the cenobitic and anchoritic life.⁵⁴ Perhaps it might be better to suppose that a certain pedagogical method is at work in his various treatments of the subject. The discussion of the respective merits of the cenobitic life and the anchoritic or eremitic life was already practically a commonplace in the epoch in which Cassian was writing.⁵⁵ It

51 See ORIGEN, *HomGn* 15,4 (GCS 29). For the history of etymological-allegorical interpretation, see L.L. GRABBE, *Etymology in Early Jewish Interpretation. The Hebrew Names in Philo*, New York 1988.

52 *Conl.* 14.VIII.

53 *Conl.* 14.VIII.

54 See ROUSSEAU, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian*, 180-182.

55 See M. SHERIDAN, «Monastic Terminology: Monk, Cenobite, Nun», in *RB* 1980. *The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English with Notes*, ed. T. FRY, Collegeville 1981, 301-321, and on Jerome's contribution (*Letter* 22): A. DE VOGÜÉ, *Histoire littéraire du*

is not necessary to recount the history of that discussion here. However, it must be noted that Cassian insisted strongly on the idea of the cenobitic life as the necessary and indispensable formation for the eremitic life. As has already been noted, it corresponds also to that first stage necessary for reaching the purity of heart required for entering into the contemplative life.

In the Preface to the *Conferences*, as we have seen, Cassian accepts these traditional categories without questioning them. However, in the course of the development of his work, there emerge distinctions that at the end will place the whole discussion on a different level. In the fourteenth Conference, the Abbot Nesteros, after having explained that the active life (*actualis perfectio*) has two aspects, first, to know the nature of the vices and the method for healing them, and, secondly, the discernment of the order of the virtues and how to conform our soul to their perfection,⁵⁶ adds that the active life (*πρακτική*) is subdivided into many professions and ways of life. Some, like Elias, Eliseus, and Antony go to the desert where they are united to God in a union that is very close. Others «devoted every painstaking effort of theirs to the instruction of the brothers and to the constant care of the cenobia» like Abbot John of Thmuis. Others assist pilgrims in the guest houses like Macarius of Alexandria. Still others dedicate themselves to the care of the sick, of the poor and of the oppressed.⁵⁷ The important thing is «to strive most zealously and diligently to attain to perfection in the work that he has undertaken». Then he alludes to the teaching of Paul «not all are apostles, not all are prophets, not all are teachers, not all have the grace of healing, not all speak in tongues, not all interpret».⁵⁸ He concludes that «For there are many ways that lead to God, and therefore each person should finish the one that he has taken up, intent upon his course, so that he may be perfect in his profession, whatever it may be».⁵⁹

In the nineteenth Conference Cassian returns to the subject of the purpose of the cenobitic and eremitic life. The Abbot John, now elderly, explains that he had passed thirty years in the cenobitic life and then twenty in the eremitic life before returning to the cenobium in order to achieve «the readier perfection of an easier chosen orientation - the one that I took up - might be acquired

mouvement monastique dans l'Antiquité. 1. Le monachisme latin de la mort d'Antoine à la fin du séjour de Jérôme à Rome (356-385), Paris 1991, 235-340.

56 *Conl.* 14.III.1

57 *Conl.* 14.IV.

58 *Conl.* 14.V; cf. 1 Cor 12:28.

59 *Conl.* 14.VI.1

and there might be less danger from the humility of a more sublime profession that had been presumed upon».⁶⁰ John explains in the course of a rather long and pedagogically sophisticated speech that: «For a person is truly and not partially perfect when he endures both the bleakness of solitude in the desert and the weakness of his brothers in the cenobium with equal greatness of soul».⁶¹ It is very difficult to find such a person, John says. However, he had the good fortune to know four such people, the Abbots Moses, Paphnutius and the two Macarii. These, for example, bore the continuous disturbance of innumerable visits «with a steady patience». No one «was sure which profession of theirs they gave more of an effort to - that is, whether their greatness of soul was more wonderfully fit for eremitical purity or for the communal way of life».⁶²

It will be noted that the terminology used here resembles that used to describe the ambidextrous man, above all the key word «magnanimity».⁶³ These monks then are concrete examples of the ideal of the ambidextrous man already exemplified in the person of the Apostle Paul and now adapted to the concrete situations of monasticism. The contrary (or absence) of this perfection is then described precisely as «smallness of soul» (*pusillanimitas*). The small-souled are those who do not know how to use every situation to spiritual advantage. According to the Abbot John, they are «always imperfect and weak in any event, are moved wherever the wind of disturbance blows». They are never content in any situation. John describes them thus: «Just as they are shaken with impatience at the society of the brothers or at an interruption from them, so also when they are living in the desert they cannot bear the vastness of that very silence that they have sought out, for in fact they do not even know the reason why the desert should be desired or sought out».⁶⁴ Whoever reads this conference attentively, becomes aware at the end that what is important, the spiritual

60 *Conl.* 19.III.1

61 *Conl.* 19.IX.1

62 *Conl.* 19.IX.2

63 On Cassian's use of this word, already attested in the *Vetus Latina* for the Greek μακροθυμία, see R.-A. GAUTHIER, *Magnanimité. L'idéal de la grandeur dans la philosophie païenne et dans la théologie chrétienne*, (Bibliothèque Thomiste 28) Paris 1951, 216-217. Gauthier regards the use of the Latin term as an error because of the connotations it had in Stoic usage. However, one could also regard its use by Cassian as part of the ongoing transformation of the pre-Christian philosophic heritage. See also W. HAASE, «Grossmut», in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* 3, 887-899 and F. MARTY, «Magnanimité», in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 10, Paris 1980, 91-97.

64 *Conl.* 19.X.1.

goal, is certainly not to become a hermit but to develop the inner man, to become an ambidextrous person. This can be achieved either in the city working with pilgrims or in the cenobium or in the desert. The cenobium is preferable for beginners, for there one learns to struggle against the vices, but there is no lack of opportunities and possibilities for those who leave the cenobium too early. For them Cassian proposes a series of spiritual exercises by means of which their vices can be identified and healed.⁶⁵ In short, opportunities for making spiritual progress are never lacking, since every conceivable situation offers an opportunity.

We have returned to our point of departure, the judge Aoth, the ambidextrous man, an ideal that is undoubtedly difficult to achieve but in the marvelous phrase of Cassian: «For the one who recognizes with prudence what ought to be investigated is very near to learning, and the one who begins to understand what he is unaware of is not far from knowledge».⁶⁶ The one who is armed with the ideal of the ambidextrous man is such a person. He knows that spiritual progress will be realized in the depth of the inner man. He knows that, to obtain interior peace, he must struggle against the passions, against the vices. He knows that in every human situation there is an opportunity to progress toward God.

65 *Conl.* 19.XII-XIV.1 The use of medical terminology is very marked in these passages. The procedure of applying opposites was in fact an ancient medical principle. However, there the vocabulary of «asceticism» is also present in this passage: *uirtutum studia et instrumenta sanitatum* and *contrarius semet ipsum obiectionibus semper exerceat* (XIV). The phrase *uirtutum studium* is a translation of ἄσκησις found already in the old Latin translation of the *Vita Antonii*. Cassian uses it extensively. On the history of the terminology, see L.T.A. LORIÉ, *Spiritual Terminology in the Latin Translations of the Vita Antonii with reference to fourth and fifth century monastic literature*, Utrecht 1955, 69-101.

66 *Conl.* 10.IX.3.

JACOB AND ISRAEL.

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF AN INTERPRETATION¹

In the preface to the first book of his Conferences, John Cassian explains that, having treated the exterior and visible form of the monastic life in his previous work, the Institutes, he now plans to treat of the invisible and interior life. He then develops this contrast by reference to the names of Jacob and Israel:

Thus the person who has read the previous work and is worthy of the name of that spiritual Jacob because of the supplanting of the carnal vices may now - taking up not so much my own institutes as those of the fathers and passing over to the deserts and as it were the dignity of Israel, thanks to an insight into the divine purity - be also similarly taught what must be observed at this summit of perfection.²

The spiritual meaning of Jacob to which Cassian refers is the definition of his name as «supplanter» (*subplantatione*) and the meaning of the name Israel implicitly referred to is «one who sees God». This meaning is stated more explicitly in the fifth Conference dealing with the eight principal vices where Cassian defines Israel as «the contemplation of sublime and holy things» and as «the soul that sees God».³ The meaning is also given in Conference twelve as «one who sees God».⁴ The biblical texts underlying this interpretation of the names Jacob and Israel are Gen 27:36 and 32:29-30 where Esau states that Jacob has

1 Originally published in: *Mysterium Christi. Symbolgegenwart und theologische Bedeutung. Festschrift für Basil Studer*, ed. M. Löhrer - E. Salmann (SA 116), Roma 1995, 219-241.

2 *Conl. praef. I.1., ut quisquis iam superioris operis lectione Iacob illius intelligibilis nomen carnalium uitiorum subplantatione promeruit, nunc etiam non tam mea quam patrum instituta suscipiens diuinae iam puritatis intuitu admeritum et ut ita dixerim dignitatem transiens Israelis, quid in hoc quoque perfectionis culmine debeat obseruare similiter instruat.* The English citations of Cassian are from: JOHN CASSIAN, *The Conferences*, tr. B. Ramsey (ACW 57), New York 1997 and JOHN CASSIAN, *The Institutes*, tr. B. Ramsey (ACW 58), New York 2000.

3 *Conl. 5.XXIII.1: Israhelem, id est contemplationem rerum summarum atque sanctarum; 5.23.2 filii Israelis, id est animae uidentis Deum.*

4 *Conl. 12.XI.4: id est in eo qui uidens deum.*

supplanted him twice and Jacob states that he has seen God and yet his life has been preserved.⁵ The change of name is narrated in the latter text.

However, in the fifth Conference the underlying textual ground has shifted to Deut 7:1-2 where Egypt and the seven nations whose territory the Lord has promised to the Israelites, represent figuratively the eight principal vices.⁶ Here, Israel on the literal level is no longer the patriarch of Gen 32 but the twelve tribes of Israel. On the figurative level, however, the meaning of Israel is the same as in the Genesis text, «the soul that sees God». This is possible because of the principal of interpreting the Scriptures by means of the Scriptures. Especially when the spiritual (allegorical) meaning of a name has been established by means of an etymology, the same meaning can be applied wherever the name is found. Cassian explains that on the figurative level the nations represent the vices that must be expelled and replaced by virtues, because virtue cannot dwell together with vice. This is reinforced with a quotation from 2 Cor 6:14 stating that justice cannot participate with iniquity nor light with darkness. The virtues that take the place of the vices are interpreted as «the children of Israel», that is, of «the soul that sees God».⁷ This interpretation of the «children» as virtues is, as we shall see, a significant detail in tracing the history of the interpretation of these names.

In the twelfth Conference Cassian returns to the interpretation of the names Jacob and Israel in the context of the struggle for chastity, a particular case of the struggle to replace vice with virtue. Here the detail of the text of Gen 32:25, in which the nerve of Jacob's thigh is paralyzed is interpreted as the acquisition of chastity. In Jacob the struggle of continence is replaced by virtue and thus he merits the title of Israel. In this case the etymological meaning of the name Jacob derived from Gen 27:36 is used to interpret the text of Gen 32:25.⁸

5 The texts in the Vulgate are Gen 27:36: *at ille subiunxit iuste vocatum est nomen eius Iacob subplantavit enim me in altera vice primogenita mea ante tulit et nunc secundo subripuit benedictionem meam rursumque ad patrem numquid non reservasti ait et mihi benedictionem*; Gen 32:28-30: *at ille nequaquam inquit Iacob appellabitur nomen tuum sed Israel quoniam si contra Deum fortis fuisti quanto magis contra homines praevaleris interrogavit eum Iacob dic mihi quo appellaris nomine respondit cur quaeris nomen meum et benedixit ei in eodem loco vocavitque Iacob nomen loci illius Phanuhel dicens vidi Deum facie ad faciem et salva facta est anima mea.*

6 *Conl.* 5.XVI.1; 5.XXV.1.

7 *Conl.* 5.XXIII.2: *Et ita singulis vitiis expulsis eorum loca, id est adfectus, uirtutes contrariae possidebunt, quae filii Israelis, id est animae uidentis deum non inmerito nuncupantur.*

8 *Conl.* 12.XI.2: *Quisquis ergo intellectualis illius Iacob, id est subplantatoris transcenderit gradum, ab illa continentiae conluctatione ac supplantatione uitiorum obstupefacto femoris nervo ad Israelis meritum perpetua cordis directione conscendet.*

To develop this interpretation, Cassian, again using the hermeneutical principle of interpreting the Scriptures by means of other Scriptures containing the same elements (in this case the name Israel), brings in the text of Ps 75:2, for, he says, David, through prophetic inspiration also distinguished this order in the spiritual life. The first part of the verse, «God is made known in Juda» signifies «confession». The second part of the verse, «in Israel his name is great» refers to the one «who sees God». Then, to explain this interpretation, he introduces the second verse of the psalm, «His dwelling is established in peace», which means that the dwelling of God is «not in the struggle of conflict and in the battle of vice but rather in the peace of chastity and in perpetual tranquillity of heart».⁹

To expand the notion of «dwelling» further, Cassian moves to another psalm verse, again on the basis of the same hermeneutical principle (this time the name «Jacob» provides the connecting link), «The Lord loves the gates of Zion above all the tents of Jacob» (Ps 86:2). The key elements here are the contrast between Jacob and Zion, with the implicit idea that the Lord «dwells» in Zion, and the etymological interpretation given to the name «Zion» as observation tower of God (*specula dei*).¹⁰ The person who has extinguished the passion of the flesh becomes the dwelling of peace and a «spiritual Sion - that is, the observation of God - and will also be his dwelling place». On the basis of this exegesis of the psalm verse Cassian draws the same conclusion as that based on Ps 75:2-3, that the dwelling of the Lord is not in the struggle for continence but in the peace of chastity and that it is in the observation tower, the contemplation of the virtues, that he dwells.

This etymological-allegorical interpretation of the names Jacob and Israel, or, more precisely, of the change of Jacob's name to that of Israel, could thus serve to describe the whole course of the spiritual life, that is, the monk's goal in struggling against the vices in order to reach the contemplative life, and become the dwelling place of God. The two names serve to designate the two aspects or phases of the spiritual life described by Cassian elsewhere as the practical and contemplative life.¹¹ The biblical text becomes a vehicle for the transmission of a theory of the spiritual life.

9 *Conl.* 12.XI.3.

10 *Conl.* 12.XI.4: *Videtis ergo, quia sicut non est in conluctatione continentiae, sed in castitatis pace locus domini, ita etiam habitatio eius in specula sit et contemplatione uirtutum. Vnde non inmerito portae Sion cunctis Iacob tabernaculis praeferuntur : diligit enim dominus portas Sion super omnia tabernacula Iacob .*

11 *Conl.* 14.I.

1. PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA

This interpretation had a history of almost four hundred years before it was taken up by Cassian.¹² It is found for the first time in the writings of Philo of Alexandria where virtually all the elements found in Cassian are already present and many more as well.¹³ Philo makes extensive use of the patriarch Jacob to represent the person engaged in the spiritual contest to overcome vice and acquire virtue. The allegorical interpretation given to Jacob by Philo forms part of a more extensive interpretation of the three patriarchs, in terms of traditional Greek pedagogy transposed onto a spiritual plane, as types of the three requirements necessary to achieve a perfect education: instruction, predisposition, and practice.¹⁴ The migrations of Abraham are to be understood as steps in receiving a divine teaching. Isaac, the son of Abraham (who represents allegorically the intellect) and Sara (representing virtue), becomes the symbol of the autodidact. Jacob represents the figure of the ascetic or the one who engages in the acquisition of virtue through practice. In the *De Abrahamo* 53, Philo makes clear that these three qualities exist in all three but that they predominate in one or the other.¹⁵ Here the exposition of Philo's interpretation will be limited to the figure of Jacob (and that in view of the change of name) but it should be kept in mind that for him Jacob represents only one type or one aspect of the spiritual journey.

12 For partial treatments of this history, see: A. BUTTERWECK, *Jakobs Ringkampf am Jabbok. Gen 32,4ff in der jüdischen Tradition bis zum Frühmittelalter*, Frankfurt-Bern 1981; P.-M. GUILLAUME, «Jacob. Le judaïsme. Les Pères de l'Église», in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 8, Paris 1974, 5-16; P. HEINISCH, *Der Einfluss Philos auf die älteste christliche Exegese (Barnabas, Justin und Clemens von Alexandria)*, Münster 1908; A. MEYER, *Das Rätsel des Jacobusbriefes*, Giessen 1930, 94-225.

13 A slightly earlier spiritualizing interpretation of Jacob including the struggle at the Jabbok is found in the book of Wisdom 10:10-11. See BUTTERWECK, *Jakobs Ringkampf am Jabbok*, 57-61.

14 See C.K. REGGIANI, «La simbologia di Abramo in Filone di Alessandria», in *Spiritual Progress. Studies in the Spirituality of Late Antiquity and Early Monasticism*, ed. J. Driscoll – M. Sheridan (Studia Anselmiana 115), Rome 1994, 4-5. Philo gives this explanation in *Abr.* 52-53: ὁ μὲν γὰρ πρῶτος, ἐπὶ κλησιν Ἀβραάμ, σύμβολον διδασκαλικῆς ἀρετῆς ἐστίν, ὁ δὲ μέσος, Ἰσαάκ, φυσικῆς, ὁ δὲ τρίτος, Ἰακώβ, ἀσκητικῆς. See also *Ios.* 1: Τρεῖς μὲν εἰσιν ἰδέαι, δι' ὧν τὸ ἄριστον τέλος, μάθησις, φύσις, ἄσκησις.

15 See D. WINSTON, «Philo's Ethical Theory», in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung* II.21.1, ed. W. Haase, Berlin-New York 1984, 410, for references to the philosophical tradition from which this is derived.

In keeping with his interpretation of the three patriarchs as representing respectively instruction, nature, and training, Philo produced three treatises on these figures. Unfortunately only the one on Abraham has survived.¹⁶ Our knowledge of Philo's interpretation of the figure of Jacob must therefore be drawn from numerous references scattered throughout his other works. However, these show a remarkable consistency of interpretation due to his general conception of the Pentateuch as an allegory about individual spiritual development and to the consistent application of etymologically derived meanings to the various personages of the narrative.¹⁷ In his work *De mutatione nominum*, Philo gives the two etymological interpretations of the names Jacob and Israel based on the texts of Gen 27:36 and 32:29-30:

We shall also find that the change of Jacob's name to Israel is much to the purpose. Why so? Because Jacob is the supplanter, and Israel he who sees God. It is the task of a supplanter in the practice of virtue to disturb and shake and upset the supports on which passion rests, and all the firmness and stability which they have. That is a work which cannot commonly be done without hard effort and the stains of the arena, but only when one maintains the contests of wisdom to the end, and drilled in the gymnastics of the soul wrestles with the thoughts which oppose and hold it fast in their grip. The task of him who sees God is not to leave the sacred area uncrowned, but to carry off the prizes of victory.¹⁸

16 Philo mentions that he had written these three treatises at the beginning of his work *De Iosepho*. The work seems to have been lost early, for it is not in the list of the works of Philo given by Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* II.18) or Jerome (*Vir. ill.* 11).

17 On the importance of the meanings of names for Philo, see L.L. GRABBE, *Etymology in Early Jewish Interpretation. The Hebrew Names in Philo*, Ithaca, N.Y. 1988, 19-23. It is uncertain where Philo obtained his etymological meanings. He may have made use of already existing lists. In any case, he uses etymologically derived meanings to generate allegorical meanings. See also I. OPELT, «Etymologie», in *Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum* 6, Stuttgart 1966, 797-844.

18 *Mut.* 81. The English translation is from *Philo* 5, tr. F.H. Colson - G.H. Whitaker (LCL 275), Cambridge, Mass. 1934, 183. The Greek text is found in P. WENDLAND, *Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt* 3, Berlin 1898, 156-203: Ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν Ἰακώβ μετονομάζεσθαι συμβέβηκεν εἰς τὸν Ἰσραὴλ, οὐκ ἀπὸ σκοποῦ. διὰ τί; ὅτι ὁ μὲν Ἰακώβ περνιστής, ὁ δὲ Ἰσραὴλ ὁρῶν τὸν θεὸν καλεῖται. περνιστοῦ μὲν οὖν ἔργον ἀσκοῦντος ἀρετὴν τὰς βάσεις τοῦ πάθους, αἷς ἐφίδρυται, καὶ εἴ τι ὄχυρόν καὶ ἰδρυμένον ἐν αὐταῖς κινεῖν καὶ σαλευεῖν καὶ ἀνατρέπειν—ταῦτα δὲ οὐ δίχα ἀγωνίας ἀκονιτὶ φιλεῖ γίνεσθαι, ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴν τις τοὺς φρονήσεως ἄθλους διαθλῶν γυμνάζεται τε τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς γυμνάσματα καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἀντιπάλους καὶ τραχηλίζοντας αὐτὴν λογισμοὺς παλαίῃ—, τοῦ δὲ τὸν θεὸν ὁρῶντος τὸ μὴ ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ ἀγῶνος ἀστεφάνωτον ἐξελθεῖν, ἀλλὰ τὰ ἐπὶ τῇ νίκῃ βραβεῖα ἄρασθαι.

The etymology given for Jacob, «the supplanter» (ὁ περνιστής), appears to be based on the Septuagint of Gen 27:36 (ἐπτέρνικεν) «he has supplanted me», which clearly connects the name Jacob in Hebrew (יַעֲקֹב) with the verb (יָעַקַב) meaning to assail or overreach (literally: to attack at the heel). The text of Gen 25:26 connects it instead with the substantive (heel; in Greek: πτέρνη). The Greek verb, like the Hebrew, means literally to strike with or at the heel or to trip up, although it is not clear that the verb was used in this way (or even existed) before the Septuagint translation. In any case, Philo seems to have understood it to mean «to strike at the heel», for his explanation of the task of a «supplanter»,¹⁹ «to disturb, shake and upset» seems to be based on this idea. It is of some interest that the original image is still visible in the Latin translation of Gen 25:26 (*planta* = heel or sole of the foot) and 27:36 (*subplantavit*).

The etymology given to the name Israel, «he who sees God» (ὁ ὁρῶν τὸν θεόν), on the other hand, seems not to be based on the text of Gen 32:29 either in Hebrew or Greek but rather on the idea contained in vs. 31: «I have seen God face to face». The explanation implied in vs. 29, «for you have striven with God» (כִּי־שָׁרִיתָ עִם־אֱלֹהִים) would connect the name with the verb meaning to strive (שָׁרִיתָ) and the word for God (אֱלֹהִים). The etymology given by Philo connects it instead with the verb to see (ἵκνῃ) of vs. 31 and the word for God (אֱלֹהִים). This does not take account of the first two letters of the name Israel, which may be why some other sources give variant meanings such as «mind seeing God» or «man seeing God».²⁰ In any case, the name Israel symbolizes for Philo «the mind contemplating God and the world, for it means “the one who sees God”».²¹

In addition to the etymologies of the names there are present in this passage a number of key ideas and terms that are linked to Philo's interpretation of the figure of Jacob wherever he invokes it, and which will remain with the interpretation throughout its history. The most fundamental of these is the notion of askesis or the practice of virtue (ἔργον ἀσκητικὸς ἀρετῆν). Further on in the same passage Philo repeatedly refers to Jacob as «the ascetic soul» (ἀσκητικῇ ψυχῇ) or

19 One should not be misled by the later English meaning of supplant: “to take the place of,” which is based rather on the story of Gen 25: 27-34.

20 See GRABBE, *Etymology in Early Jewish Interpretation*, 172-173; BUTTERWECK, *Jakobs Ringkampf am Jabbok*, 65. However, the sources quoted by Grabbe are not independent of Philo and the interpretation “mind seeing God” is probably derived from him.

21 *Somn.* II, 173: ὁ μὲν Ἰσραὴλ ἐστὶ νοῦς θεωρητικὸς θεοῦ τε καὶ κόσμου—καὶ γὰρ ἐρμηνεύεται θεὸν ὁρῶν—, οἶκος δὲ διανοίας ὅλη ψυχῇ.

as «the ascetic» (ὁ ἀσκητής).²² The word means practice in classical Greek and could be used to denote practice (or applying oneself methodically) in the areas of art, sports, military training or the moral sphere.²³ In the moral sense it is found as early as Democritus.²⁴ Xenophon draws a parallel between the exercise of the stadium and of warfare and that of virtue.²⁵ It was particularly emphasized by the Cynics.²⁶ It is clear from the passage quoted above that Philo uses it primarily as an athletic metaphor. Many other images used in the passage refer to the area of sports.²⁷ Elsewhere, in the context of Jacob's flight from Laban, who represents the passions, Philo calls Jacob «the mind in training» (ὁ νοῦς ὁ ἀσκητής).²⁸ In the passage on which Philo is commenting (Gen 31:20 ff.), Laban is called the Syrian, which is interpreted etymologically to mean «Highlands». Philo explains that when the «mind in training» sees passion to be on high, proud and exalted, he flees with all the parts of his training (τὰ αὐτοῦ πάντα μέρη τῆς ἀσκήσεως), which include: «readings, ponderings, acts of worship, and of remembrance of noble souls, self-control, discharge of daily duties».²⁹ Philo gives a similar list of Jacob's spiritual exercises in the work *Quis heres*: research, investigation, readings, listening, attention, self-control, indifference to things (morally) indifferent.³⁰ Finally, the word «athlete» (ἄθλητής) is used many times by Philo in reference to Jacob.³¹

22 *Mut.* 81-85.

23 For numerous references see M. OLPHE-GAILLARD, «Ascèse, Ascétisme», in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 1, Paris 1937, 939-940.

24 H. DIELS, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* 1, Berlin ²1906, frag. 242: πλέονες ἐξ ἀσκήσιος ἀγαθοὶ γίνονται.

25 XENOPHON, *Cyropaedia* 7,5,75.

26 G. REALE, *Storia della filosofia antica* 3. *I sistemi dell'età ellenistica*, Milano 1980, 33-34.

27 The passage is in fact saturated with terminology having an origin in athletics: ἀγωνίας (contest, struggle), ἀκονιτὶ (without dust [of the arena]), ἄθλους (contests), διαθλῶν (struggle desperately) γυμνάζηται (practice gymnastic exercises), τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς γυμνάσματα (exercises of the soul), τραχηλίζοντας (a neck-hold in wrestling), ἀστεφάνωτον (uncrowned, referring to the athlete's laurel crown), βραβεῖα (prizes).

28 *Leg.* III,18; see also *Leg.* II,89 for the same phrase.

29 *Leg.* III,18: ἀναγνώσεις, μελέται, θεραπείαι, τῶν καλῶν μνημαί, ἐγκράτεια, τῶν καθηκόντων ἐνέργειαι. The English translation is from *Philo* 1, ed. F.H. Colson - G.H. Whitaker (LCL 226), Cambridge, Mass. 1929, 313. The phrase «the remembrance of noble souls» (τῶν καλῶν μνημαί) might perhaps be translated better as «remembrance of noble principles».

30 *Her.* 253: πάντα γὰρ τὰ τῆς ἀσκήσεως ἐδώδιμα καθέστηκεν, ἡ ζήτησις, ἡ σκέψις, ἡ ἀνάγνωσις, ἡ ἀκρόασις, ἡ προσοχή, ἡ ἐγκράτεια, ἡ ἐξαδιαφόρησις τῶν ἀδιαφόρων.

31 E.g., *Leg.* III,201-202; *Sobr.* 65; *Somn.* 1.126 (here Jacob is also called the «model archetype of the ascetic soul»), 129.

He is even called the «perfect athlete» (ἀθλητῆς τέλειος) in reference to the command of Gen 31:3 to return to the land of his father.³²

The struggle involved in this athletic contest for which Jacob (the intellect) engages in training is, as stated in the passage quoted above, against the passions. It is the role of the supplanter to «disturb and shake and upset» the bases (τὰς βάσεις τοῦ πάθους) on which passion rests.³³ This is done through the practice of virtue. For Philo, passion is the great enemy and obstacle to happiness. The athlete, the mind in training, must combat it, struggle against it and sometimes flee from it. This vision pervades Philo's writings. Passion and wickedness are often placed in a parallel relationship. When Jacob says, «With only my staff I crossed this Jordan» (Gen 32:11), Philo explains that the staff represents education (παιδεία), while the Jordan signifies «descent», that is, all that is below, earthly and corruptible, the world of passion and vice (τὰ κατὰ κακίαν καὶ πάθος).³⁴ Jacob flees from Laban (Gen 31:21), that is, from what Laban represents: colors, figures and, in general, bodies, which through the senses wound the intellect. Laban is the symbol of the thoughts which cling to sensations.³⁵ He is called «the friend of the sensations», who pursues the intellect (Gen 31:26). He accuses Jacob of robbing him of Lea and Rachel, that is, of sane reason (τὸ φρονεῖν). To Laban's protestation that he would have let Jacob go (Gen 31:26-27), Philo responds that if he really would have let him go, he would have freed his soul. He would have cleansed his soul of every echo of the bodily and the sensations, for this is how the mind (διάνοια) is released from evils and passions.³⁶ Philo concludes by saying that we flee not only from Laban as the lover of bodies and colors but from his world in which the voices of the senses produce an echo in the energy of the passions. We must engage in a necessary practice (μελέτην ἀναγκαίαν) that Jacob is engaged in, that of destroying the «strange idols» (Gen 35:12) of the soul. These lead to the dissolution of virtue and good dispositions (εὐπαθείας) and give form and consistency to the vices and passions (κακίας δὲ καὶ παθῶν σύστασις). Here, as also in the struggle of Jacob in Gen 32:29-31 Philo sees typical rather than unique events.³⁷

32 *Migr.* 27.

33 *Mut.* 81.

34 *Leg.* II,89.

35 *Leg.* III,15-16.

36 *Leg.* III,20-21: οὕτως γὰρ ἀπολυτροῦται κακιῶν καὶ παθῶν διάνοια.

37 *Leg.* III,22-23.

For Philo the great remedy for passion (ἱασις τοῦ πάθους) is the virtue of temperance (ὁ σωφροσύνης λόγος) which is contrary to pleasure. The brazen serpent that God commands Moses to construct (Num 21:8) is a symbol of temperance.³⁸ By association of images (or of words) Philo moves to another serpent (ὄφις), that of Gen 49:17, where Jacob, speaking of his son Dan, says «May Dan be a viper on the path». Our path, explains Philo, is the soul. The viper again represents temperance. Philo draws a parallel between the «path of life» on which one encounters contrasting natures, animate and inanimate, reasonable and without reason, virtuous and wicked, young and old, etc., with contrasting and conflicting parts of the soul. Jacob's wish or blessing for Dan is that temperance should be like a serpent on the soul journeying among the situations of life. Few travel the way of virtue but the way of vice is well trodden. Therefore Jacob expresses the wish that Dan, representing the virtue of temperance, should be like a serpent on the well trodden path of passion and vice (τὸ πάθος καὶ τὴν κακίαν), where the thoughts (λογισμοί) banished by virtue squander life.³⁹

Philo then continues his exegesis of the rest of Gen 49:17 (referring to Dan as a serpent) «that bites the horse's heel». This means the attitude that strikes at the mortal and generated state. The passions are represented by the horse, which, like passion, has four hooves and is proud and inconstant. The character of temperance loves to bite, damage and annul the passions. The phrase «so that his rider falls backwards» is interpreted to mean: so that the intellect, which rides the passions, does not fall in front of them but behind. He concludes that, if the intellect is moved by an irrational passion and does not succeed in riding it but falls behind, then it will bear a most beautiful fruit, the absence of passion (ἀπάθεια).⁴⁰

This symbolism of the horse is then extended by applying the same interpretation to Exod 15:1 «horse and rider he has thrown into the sea», which means «the four passions and the poor intellect».⁴¹ Philo says that this is in fact the principal point of the song of Moses to which everything else is to be related. If, on the other hand, a soul is without passion (ἀπάθεια), it will be able to enjoy perfect happiness.⁴² The goal of the ascetic (or the one in training) is thus to achieve ἀπάθεια, a state in which the passions have been eliminated or subju-

38 *Leg.* II,79-81,92-93.

39 *Leg.* II,97-98: ἐν οἷς κατατρίβονται τὸν βίον οἱ φυγάδες ἀρετῆς λογισμοί.

40 *Leg.* II,100: ἐὰν δὲ ἐπὶ πάθος κινηθεῖς ἄλογον μὴ ἐπεκδράμῃ, ἀλλὰ κατόπιν μείνῃ, ἀπάθειαν, τὸ κάλλιστον, καρπώσεται.

41 *Leg.* II,102.

42 *Leg.* II,102: ἐὰν γὰρ ἀπάθεια κατάσχη τὴν ψυχήν, τελέως εὐδαιμονήσῃ.

gated. In this he comes to resemble God who is also free from passion. To understand the notion of passionlessness, it is important to keep in mind that it is the opposite of (or better absence of) πάθος (passion) but not of the εὐπαθείαι, the rational emotions. These are enjoyed by God as well as by humans.⁴³ The passions are destructive precisely because of their irrational character.⁴⁴

To return to the figure of Jacob, as long as he is still engaged in training, in the struggle against passion, he is called Jacob, but to the extent that he achieves a clear vision, he is called Israel, «the one who sees God».⁴⁵ Then he exchanges the use of the ears (representing the phase of listening and learning) for that of the eyes. He comes to see what previously he had heard about.⁴⁶ The divine light opens the «eyes of the soul».⁴⁷ Sight is superior to the hearing and by means of wisdom (represented by light) one comes to contemplate the One who is wise.⁴⁸ God himself, of whom light is the archetype, gives this capability to men.⁴⁹ Light can only be seen by means of light and God, who is his own light, can only be seen by means of himself by those to whom he reveals his existence.⁵⁰

A second prize is gained by Jacob through the laming of his hip (Gen 32:25). The phrase «paralysis of the hip» (πλάτους νάρκη), Philo explains, means symbolically «boastfulness and contempt».⁵¹ The same interpretation of this verse is also given in another passage where Philo describes this laming of Jacob's hip as the «crown of victory» and says that it is called by an unusual name, «paralysis» (νάρκα). It is the most marvelous prize ever awarded to a victor: its symbolic meaning is that the soul, having become strong and having been per-

43 *Cher.* 86. See also *Somn.* II,174. For a recent carefully nuanced treatment of this subject, see WINSTON, «Philo's Ethical Theory», 400-405. As Winston notes (p. 402), the Stoic doctrine of *apatheia* has been widely misinterpreted by both ancient and modern authors.

44 See *Leg.* III,107-110 where pleasure is equated with passion.

45 See *Somn.* I,171; *Praem.* 36.

46 *Migr.* 39.

47 *Migr.* 39; *Praem.* 37.

48 *Migr.* 39: ὥσπερ γὰρ διὰ μουσικῆς τὰ κατὰ μουσικὴν καὶ διὰ πάσης τέχνης τὰ ἐν ἐκάστη καταλαμβάνεται, οὕτω καὶ διὰ σοφίας τὸ σοφὸν θεωρεῖται.

49 *Migr.* 40; *Praem.* 44.

50 *Praem.* 45-46. According to Wolfson this does not mean seeing the essence of God, something Philo denies is possible. See H.A. WOLFSON, *Philo. Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* 2, Cambridge ²1948, 90-92.

51 *Praem.* 47-48.

fectured in the contests of virtue, does not allow itself to be exalted by arrogance and boastfulness.⁵²

The ladder in Jacob's dream (Gen 28:12-13) is interpreted by Philo to refer either to the soul itself or to the life of the one in training. In those intelligences (διανοίαι) that have reached the highest degree of purification - the top of the ladder - God (the sovereign of all) will be present (citing Lev 26:12) but in those not yet purified, still weighed down by the weight of the body, only the divine words (represented by the angels ascending and descending) will be present carrying on the activity of purification by means of the precepts of virtue. The vices dwelling in the soul need to be expelled so that the Unique Good may take possession of it. Philo addresses the soul then with the exhortation to become the dwelling of God, his holy temple.⁵³ In another passage not dedicated to Jacob but also using Lev 26:12, Philo gives a similar interpretation of the soul as the city of God, the place where God dwells (citing Ps 46[45]:5). This is expanded with an explanation of the name Jerusalem as meaning «vision of peace», and Philo asks rhetorically, what more venerable and holy dwelling could be found for God in the created world than the mind in which peace is established and that yearns for contemplation.⁵⁴

Philo's interpretation of the figure of Jacob-Israel is too rich and complex to pretend to expound it fully here, but at least a few additional elements should be mentioned. Philo also applies the terminology of the βίως πρακτικός (active or practical life) and the βίως θεωρητικός (contemplative life) to the spiritual trajectory symbolized by Jacob-Israel. The active life, characterized by Philo as participation in private and public life, is described as a kind of prelude to the more perfect contest of contemplation.⁵⁵ Another significant element is the introduction of the traditional maxim «Know yourself» (γνῶθι σαυτόν) into the quest for perfection.⁵⁶

52 *Somn.* I,129-131. The word of God serves as coach or trainer to bring the soul to this point.

53 *Somn.* I,148-149: σπούδαζε οὖν, ὃ ψυχὴ, θεοῦ οἶκος γενέσθαι, ἱερὸν ἅγιον, ἐνδιαίτημα κάλλιστον. On the history of the interpretation of Jacob's ladder, see S. PRICOCO, «La scala di Giacobbe - L'interpretazione ascetica di Gen 28,12 da Filone a San Benedetto», in *Regulae Benedicti Studia. Annuario Internationale, Band 14/15*, ed. B. Jaspert, St. Ottilien 1988, 41-58.

54 *Somn.* II,246-253. ἐπεὶ καὶ τίνα σεμνότερον καὶ ἁγιώτερον εὗροι τις ἂν οἶκον ἐν τοῖς οὐσι θεῷ ἢ φιλοθεάμονα διάνοιαν, πάνθ' ὁρᾶν ἐπειγομένην καὶ μηδὲ ὄναρ στάσεως ἢ παραχῆς ἐφιεμένην.

55 *Fug.* 36-37.

56 *Fug.* 46-47; *Somn.* 157-158; *Legat.* 69. In *Migr.* 8 Philo also equates this maxim in a slightly different form (γίνωσκε σεαυτόν) with the command of Exod 34:12: πρόσχε

The role of the Logos in relation to the development of virtue must also be mentioned.⁵⁷ In his work on the interpretation of dreams, Philo interpreted the stone that Jacob placed under his head to represent the «divine word». Jacob's goal, says Philo, is to rest upon the word and support his whole life with it. The word then behaves in the manner of a trainer (τρόπον ἀλείπτου) and forces Jacob to struggle. Having changed his ears into eyes and remade him according to a new model (καινὸν τύπον), it gives him the name of Israel.⁵⁸ Philo also identifies the «first-begotten» of God, the Logos, with Israel, the «one who sees».⁵⁹ In the *Life of Moses*, Philo speaks of Moses having as a «trainer» (ἀλείπτην) in himself «refined reason» (λογισμὸν ἀστείον). Later in the same passage, «natural right reason» (τὸν ὀρθὸν τῆς φύσεως λόγον) is said to be the only principle and source of virtues.⁶⁰ He also describes the Logos as a shepherd and pedagogue.⁶¹ Although these things are not said specifically of Jacob-Israel, the fact that the Logos is identified with Israel will allow them to play a role in later interpretation, notably that of Clement.

In the figure of Jacob then, as interpreted allegorically by Philo, we find all of the principal elements that will characterize the understanding of the spiritual life and the goal of spiritual progress in the classical formulation of this in the early Christian church: the idea of the «active life», the combat against the passions and vices, the struggle to acquire virtues, the goal of passionlessness, and the concept of the contemplative life in which the soul becomes the dwelling

σεαντῷ. Thus it could be interpreted as the traditional notion of προσοχή (attention to oneself), one of the exercises Philo mentions for the spiritual athlete. See above note 30. The most extensive treatment of the history of the maxim, attributed to the Delphic oracle (also by Philo), is to be found in P. COURCELLE, *Connais-toi toi-même 1-3* (Études Augustiniennes), Paris 1974-1975.

57 For more extensive treatment of the Logos theme in Philo, see W. Völker, *Fortschritt und Vollendung bei Philo von Alexandrien. Eine Studie zur Geschichte der Frömmigkeit* (TU 49,1), Leipzig 1938, 208-213.

58 *Somn.* I, 128-129.

59 *Conf.* 146-147: καὶ γὰρ ἀρχὴ καὶ ὄνομα θεοῦ καὶ λόγος καὶ ὁ κατ' εἰκόνα ἄνθρωπος καὶ ὁ ὀρθὸς, Ἰσραήλ, προσαγορεύεται.

60 *Mos.* I, 48: ἐν ᾧ δὲ ἔμελλε δικάζειν, τοὺς ἀρετῆς ἄθλους Μωυσῆς διήθλει τὸν ἀλείπτην ἔχων ἐν ἑαυτῷ λογισμὸν ἀστείον, ὅφ' οὗ γυμναζόμενος πρὸς τοὺς ἀρίστους βίους, τὸν τε θεωρητικὸν καὶ πρακτικόν, ἐπονεῖτο φιλοσοφίας ἀνελίτων αἰεὶ δόγματα καὶ τῇ ψυχῇ διαγινώσκων εὐτρόχως καὶ μνήμη παρακατατιθέμενος εἰς τὸ ἀληστον αὐτὰ καὶ τὰς οἰκείας αὐτίκα πράξεις ἐφαρμόττων ἐπαινετὰς πάσας, ἐφιέμενος οὐ τοῦ δοκεῖν ἀλλὰ τῆς ἀληθείας, διὰ τὸ προκεῖσθαι σκοπὸν ἕνα τὸν ὀρθὸν τῆς φύσεως λόγον, ὃς μόνος ἐστὶν ἀρετῶν ἀρχὴ τε καὶ πηγὴ.

61 *Post.* 68.

place of God. In Philo's interpretation all of these elements form part of one unified allegorical interpretation based on the idea that Jacob represents the person striving for perfection through askesis or training. It remains for us to trace the journey of this interpretation and its diffusion through the early centuries of the Christian era.

2. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

Clement of Alexandria is the first Christian author in whose writings we find Philo's interpretation of Jacob-Israel. Clement cites Philo explicitly as his source for the interpretation of some of the biblical names.⁶² He is also clearly familiar with Philo's interpretation of the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as types of the three requirements necessary to achieve a perfect education: instruction, predisposition and practice.⁶³ Jacob is designated as the «the one in training» (ἀσκητής) but the significance of the change of name to Israel is explained as the «clear-sighted» (ὁ διορατικός), a word which is found only once in Philo and not at all in the Septuagint.⁶⁴ Elsewhere, however, Clement gives Philo's interpretation, «the one who sees God», to the name Israel.⁶⁵ Clement adds the idea that from this triad of progenitors (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) comes «the seal of knowledge» because it consists of «nature, learning and practice».⁶⁶ In his work *The Pedagogue*, Clement interprets the «man» with whom Jacob wrestled as the «Pedagogue» who is the Logos. This Logos exercises with Jacob and trains him in the struggle against evil.⁶⁷ The Logos is also described, in reference to Gen 32:31, as the «face of God» by which God is illuminated and revealed.⁶⁸ It is this same Logos, Clement adds, who later tells

62 *Strom.* I,5,31.1.

63 *Strom.* I,5,31.2-5. See above note 14.

64 *Strom.* I,5,31.4. See also *Strom.* IV,22,135.1: Ὁ δὲ συνίων καὶ διορατικὸς οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ γνωστικός. Here the «clear-sighted», the «gnostic» seems to be the one who sees clearly the meaning of the Scriptures. Philo uses it in the context of Abraham's request for progeny, *Her.* 36: τῷ διορατικῷ γενεῖ.

65 *Paed.* I,7,57.1; I,9,77; *Strom.* II, 5,20: ὁ δὲ «ὁρῶν τὸν θεόν» μετωνομασμένος δείκνυται.

66 *Strom.* I,5,31.5: εἶναι τὴν σφραγίδα τῆς γνώσεως, ἐκ φύσεως καὶ μαθήσεως.

67 *Paed.* I,7,57.1: Οὗτος ἦν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ ἄγων καὶ φέρων, ὁ συγγυμναζόμενος καὶ ἀλείφων κατὰ τοῦ πονηροῦ τὸν ἀσκητὴν Ἰακώβ. Ὅτι δὲ ὁ λόγος ἦν ὁ ἀλείπτῃς ἅμα τῷ Ἰακώβ καὶ παιδαγωγὸς τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος.

68 *Paed.* I,7,57.2: ἐκάλεσε τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ τόπου ἐκείνου Εἶδος θεοῦ· εἶδον γάρ», φησί, «θεὸν πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον, καὶ ἐσώθη μου ἡ ψυχὴ». Πρόσωπον δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ λόγος, ὃ

Jacob not to be afraid to go down to Egypt (Gen 46:3), who trains the just man (Jacob) to attack or supplant (πτερνίζειν) his adversary.⁶⁹

3. ORIGEN

Following Philo and Clement, Origen takes over the meaning of Jacob as the «supplanter».⁷⁰ But the «man» (ἄνθρωπος) with whom Jacob struggles in Gen 32:25 becomes in Origen's interpretation an angel.⁷¹ Origen makes much of the fact that the verse says that the «angel» struggled with Jacob and not against him. Although this is clearly not the original sense of the verse, Origen asserts that the angel was at his side to insure his safety. The struggle was against another, one of the powers and principalities. Here, using the principle of interpreting the Scriptures by means of the Scriptures, and based on the notion of «struggle», Origen invokes the text of Eph. 6:12 to introduce the evil powers. He also seems to interpret the name Israel here to mean that Jacob was «strong with the Lord».⁷² Gone is the idea of Philo and Clement that the word (Logos) acted as Jacob's trainer.

Elsewhere, however, Origen does give the interpretation of Israel as the «one who sees God».⁷³ He also uses the word introduced by Clement, διορατικός (clear-sighted), to describe Israel in the context of explaining Jesus' assertion that he had been sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The reasoning seems to be that since Israel according to the flesh was not clear-sighted, the phrase «lost sheep of the house of Israel» must refer to others who were clear-sighted.⁷⁴ Origen also introduces a Christological interpretation for both

φωτίζεται ὁ θεὸς καὶ γνωρίζεται. Τότε καὶ Ἰσραὴλ ἐπωνόμασται, ὅτε εἶδεν τὸν θεὸν τὸν κύριον.

69 *Paed.* I,7.57.3.

70 *CCels* V,45; *ComJn* I,35.

71 *PArch* 3,2,5. This text is preserved only in the Latin translation of Rufinus.

72 See also *SelGn* (PG 12, 128): Λόγος, Κύριος καὶ Θεὸς χρηματίζων, ὃς καὶ εὐλογήσας τὸν Ἰακώβ, Ἰσραὴλ αὐτὸν ὠνόμασεν, ἐπειπὼν, ὅτι ἐνίσχυσας μετὰ Θεοῦ. See also the comment of Simonetti in ORIGÈNE, *Traité des Principes. Tome IV (Livres III et IV)*, ed. H. Crouzel - M. Simonetti (SC 269), Paris 1980, 66.

73 *PArch* 4,3,8.12: *Israhel namque mens uidens deum uel homo uidens deum interpretatur.* This is missing in the Greek text preserved in the Philocalia. See also *ComJn* II,31,189; *HomNum* XI,4; XVI,7 and *ComCt*, prol. (PG 13, 766) where Israel is presented as the type of the contemplative ideal.

74 *ComMt* XI,17: διδάσκων ὅτι εἰσὶ τινες προηγούμεναι ψυχαὶ νοεραὶ καὶ διορατικαὶ ἀπολωλυταί, τροπικῶς λεγόμεναι πρόβατα οἴκου Ἰσραὴλ.

names, Jacob and Israel, asserting that «because he supplanted the activity of the adversary, and because he alone sees the Father, he is “Jacob” and “Israel” when he has become man; as we become light because he is the light of the world, so we become Jacob because he is called “Jacob”, and Israel, because he is named “Israel”». ⁷⁵ Here the etymologies given by Philo are still at work but the final interpretation owes more to the influence of the New Testament.

The direct influence of Philo is clearly visible in Origen’s interpretation of Gen 45:27-28 which says that «Jacob rekindled his spirit and Israel said: “It is a great thing for me if my son Joseph is still living”». For Philo, Joseph represents the intellect that is in the body and lives for virtue and dominates the body. ⁷⁶ The underlying idea seems to be the meaning of Israel as the one who sees God by means of the intellect purified through the virtues. Origen combines this with Christological interpretation: «But when those who reported to him about Joseph’s life came, that is, those who said that “the life was the light of men” (John 1:4), he rekindles his spirit in himself, and the brightness of the true light is renewed in him». ⁷⁷ Later in the same homily Origen generalizes on the figure of Jacob-Israel as a type both of the Church and of the individual soul. Each of us, he says, «enters Egypt and struggles and, if he be worthy that God should always remain with him, he will make him “into a great nation”. For the number of virtues and the multitude of righteousness in which all the saints are said to be multiplied and to increase is a great nation». ⁷⁸

4. EARLY MONASTIC LITERATURE

The earliest Coptic monastic literature also shows an acquaintance with this tradition of interpretation of the names Jacob and Israel. In the letters of Antony the recipients are addressed a number of times as «Israelites according to your

75 *ComJn* I,260. The English translation is from ORIGEN, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Books 1-10*, tr. R.E. Heine (FC 80), Washington, D.C 1989, 86. Origen is not the first to give a Christological interpretation to Jacob. Such is found already in Justin. See GUILLAUME, «Jacob. Le judaïsme. Les Pères de l’Église», 9.

76 Philo, *Her.* 256.

77 *HomGn* XV,3.

78 *HomGn* XV,5-6. The English translations are from: ORIGEN, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, 206, 212. The interpretation of the children of Jacob as virtues is found also in Philo and Cassian. See above pp. 316, 323.

spiritual nature».⁷⁹ There is no doubt that this use of the name Israel is an allusion to the now traditional interpretation «a mind that sees God». The allusion seems to presuppose that Antony's readers are acquainted with this etymological/allegorical explanation. In the sixth letter, however, the reference to Gen 32:28-31 becomes quite explicit. Antony states that, if a man has known his true name (presumably «Israelite»), he will know also the name of truth. For this reason, he says, while Jacob was struggling with an angel, he retained the name of Jacob but when the light appeared, he received the name Israel. «The meaning of this name is "mind that sees God"».⁸⁰

Further evidence of the use of this interpretive tradition in early monasticism in Egypt can be found in the Pachomian literature. In the Coptic versions of the Life of Pachomius, Antony is said to have written a letter of condolence to the Pachomian monks after the death of Pachomius in which he tells them to call Horsiesius, the new head of the community, not Horsiesius, «but rather the "Israelite", that is, the one who sees God with interior as well as exterior eyes».⁸¹ Rubenson suggests that the most plausible explanation for the occurrence of this title and its explanation in the lives of Pachomius is a direct dependence upon a letter of Antony.⁸² The influence of Antony may indeed be the source but one should keep in mind also the central role that the reading and interpretation of Scripture played in early monasticism. It seems very likely that the interpretation of the names Jacob and Israel, as referring to the struggle against the passions and the goal of the contemplative life, formed part of the tradition of oral interpretation and catechesis in early monastic circles. This is in fact confirmed by a reference in a Coptic catechesis attributed to Pachomius in which the listener or reader is exhorted to take as an example «the humility of Jacob and his

79 Letter 3 (Georgian = Coptic 5 and Latin 5), 4,1; 5,1; 6,1. The Coptic text of the beginning of Letter 5 reads: **ΑΝΤΩΝΙΟC ΕΥΧΕΤΑΙ ΝΝΕΥΜΕΡΑΤΕ ΝΩΗΡΕ ΝΙCΡΑΗΛΙΤΗC ΕΤΟΥΑΔΒ ΚΑΤΑΤΕΥΟΥCΙΑ ΝΝΟΕΡΑ**. See O. WINSTEDT, «The Original Text of one of St. Antony's Letters», *Journal of Theological Studies* 7 (1906) 545. For a comment on Antony's use of the term see S. RUBENSON, *The Letters of St. Antony. Origenist Theology, Monastic Tradition and the Making of a Saint* (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity), Minneapolis 1995, 69.

80 Letter 6,1. The presence of the "angel" in the interpretation suggests the influence of Origen.

81 L.-TH. LEFORT, *S. Pachomii Vitae Sabidice Scriptae* (CSCO 99, 100; S.Coptici 9,10), Louvain 1965, 183.

82 RUBENSON, *The Letters of St. Antony*, 169.

obedience and perseverance to the point of becoming light that sees the Father of the universe; he was called Israel».⁸³

5. GREEK PATRISTIC WRITERS OF THE FOURTH CENTURY

In fourth century Greek patristic writings the citations of or allusions to this interpretation become numerous. Eusebius of Caesarea, well acquainted with the writings of both Philo and Origen, cites Jacob as a model of the ascetic and «practical» life that leads to the contemplative life.⁸⁴ He gives as the meaning of the name Israel «one who sees God».⁸⁵ Eusebius also interprets the «true Israel» to be «the pure of heart,» for «these will see God and Israel is interpreted as the “one who sees God”», thus combining the traditional interpretation with the beatitude of Matt 5:8⁸⁶ Athanasius also knows the meaning of «Israelite» as «the mind that sees God,»⁸⁷ and in commenting on Ps 75, he explains Israel as «the soul that knows God».⁸⁸ In the same work Israel is called «the clear-sighted intellect».⁸⁹ It is no surprise to encounter this interpretation in the works of Didymus of Alexandria as well, another writer well acquainted with the earlier exegetical tradition including Philo and Origen.⁹⁰ In a work uncertainly attrib-

83 L.-Th. LEFORT, *Oeuvres de S. Pachôme et de ses disciples* (CSCO 159), Louvain 1956, 1, 22. For a discussion of the authenticity of this text, see A. VEILLEUX, *Pachomian Koinonia 1*, Kalamazoo, Mich. 1982, 2. Although Crum and Lefort accepted it as a work of Pachomius, Veilleux prefers to see it as coming from the Pachomian milieu but not from Pachomius himself.

84 EUSEBIUS, *Prep. evang.* 11.6.30-31 (GCS 43.1): ὁ δὲ τούτου παῖς Ἰσραὴλ ἦν μὲν τὸ πρὶν τὸ τοῦ Ἰακώβ ὄνομα ἐπεννηγεμένως, ἀντὶ δὲ τοῦ Ἰακώβ ὁ θεὸς αὐτῷ τὸ τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ ὄνομα δωρεῖται, τὸν ἀσκητὴν καὶ πρακτικὸν ἐπὶ τὸν θεωρητικὸν μετασχησάμενος. περὶ νηστείας γὰρ ὁ Ἰακώβ ἐρμηνεύεται ὡς τὸν ἀρετῆς ἐναθλῶν ἀγῶνα· Ἰσραὴλ δὲ ὄρων θεόν, ὁποῖος ἂν εἴη ὁ γνωστικὸς καὶ θεωρητικὸς ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ νοῦς.

85 See also *Dem. evang.* 5.11.2; 7.3.45 (GCS 23); *Generalis elementaria introductio* (= *Eclogae propheticae*), ed. T. Gaisford, *Eusebii Pamphili episcopi Caesariensis eclogae propheticae*. Oxford 1842, 208,25 (= PG 21).

86 *Commentaria in Psalmos*, PG 23, 837.29. Israel also refers to «every clear-sighted soul» (πᾶσα διορατικὴ ψυχὴ) PG 23, 960.16.

87 See also *Dem. evang.* 5.11.2; 7.3.45 (GCS 23); *Generalis elementaria introductio* (= *Eclogae propheticae*), ed. T. Gaisford, *Eusebii Pamphili episcopi Caesariensis eclogae propheticae*. Oxford 1842, 208,25 (= PG 21).

88 *Expositiones in Psalmos*, PG 27, 341.28.

89 *Expositiones in Psalmos*, PG 27, 525.11: ὁ γὰρ διορατικὸς νοῦς ἐστὶν Ἰσραὴλ.

90 *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten* (1.1–8), DIDYMOS DER BLINDE, *Kommentar zum Ecclesiastes*, pt. 1, ed. G. Binde - L. Liesenborghs (*Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen* 25), Bonn 1969, 7.30-32: διορατικοῦ δὲ | “[I]σραὴλ” τοῦ ἔχοντος νοῦν ὁρῶν[τα] θ[εοῦ]ν “[βα[σιλεύ]

uted to Basil of Caesarea, the two names are explained as referring to those who are beginners and to those who have made progress, to the imperfect and to the perfect in virtue. The author refers to the meaning of Jacob as «supplanter» but not to that of Israel as «one seeing God». This may be due to the fact that he is actually commenting on Isaiah 14:1 rather than on the text of Genesis.⁹¹

Echoes of or allusions to this interpretation (or parts of it) can also be found in the works of Gregory Nazianzen,⁹² Gregory of Nyssa,⁹³ Evagrius of Pontus,⁹⁴ Nilus of Ancyra,⁹⁵ John Chrysostom,⁹⁶ Pseudo-Macarius, Cyril of Alexandria,⁹⁷ and Diadochus of Photice.⁹⁸ This list is not intended to be exhaustive.

6. LATIN WRITERS

Among Latin authors before Cassian the interpretation of the two names as referring to the two stages of the spiritual life does not appear in its entirety. Ambrose, who was well acquainted with the writings of Philo, does make use of the «ascetic» interpretation of Jacob. He calls Jacob *vir plenus exercitationis*. Jacob's exercises are directed toward bringing the passions under control and acquiring virtues. Ambrose notes that it is more difficult to rule oneself than another.

ς” ἐστιν, <τ>οῦ δὲ νοη[τοῦ Ἰσ]ρ[α]ῆλ “βασιλεύς” ἐστιν. | καὶ οὐκ ἐν τῷ τυχόντι τόπῳ, ἀλλ’ “ἐν τῇ Ἱερουσα[λὴμ βα]σιλεύς”. βασιλεύσει δὲ καὶ ἐν τῇ “ἀνω[τέρῳ]”, τῇ πνευματικῇ, τῇ ὁρώσῃ τὴν εἰρήνην π[όλει].

91 *Enarratio in prophetam Isaiam* 278; SAN BASILIO, *Commento al profeta Isaia* 2, tr. P. Trevisan, Torino 1939, 462-463.

92 *De theologia* (orat. 28) 18; GREGOR VON NAZIANZ, *Die fünf theologischen Reden*, ed. J. Barbel, Düsseldorf 1963.

93 *In Canticum canticorum* (homiliae 15) 6: 196, 199; ed. H. Langerbeck, (*Gregorii Nysseni opera* 6), Leiden 1960.

94 EVAGRE LE PONTIQUE, *Scholies aux Proverbes*, ed. P. Géhin (SCH 340), Paris 1987, Scholia 2 and 3 (pp. 91- 93). One might have expected Evagrius to make more extensive use of this interpretation in his works than he does.

95 *Logos askêtikos* (= *Liber de monastica exercitatione*) 66, 37 (PG 79, 765D). CPG 6046

96 *In Joannem* (homiliae 1-88), (PG 59, 98,6); *In Genesim* (sermo 3) [Sp.] PG 56, 527,76; *De inani gloria et de educandis liberis*: JEAN CHRYSOSTOME. *Sur la vaine gloire et l'éducation des enfants* (SCH 188), ed. A.-M. Malingrey, Paris 1972, 144-147, §47.

97 CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, *Commentarius in xii prophetas minores* (PG 71, 920B). CPG 5204.

98 *Kephaleia gnostika* 86; DIADOQUE DE PHOTICE, *Oeuvres spirituelles*, tr. E. de Places (SCH 5), Paris 1955.

Jacob's activity as shepherd is directed to governing his own desires.⁹⁹ For Ambrose Jacob represents the acquisition of the virtue of temperance, the virtue that moderates the passions.¹⁰⁰ Temperance is the teacher of discipline¹⁰¹ and Jacob is called *praeceptor disciplinae*.¹⁰² Jacob also represents the acquisition of perfect virtue, internal peace and tranquillity.¹⁰³ He has cleansed his heart, acquired peace, abandoned everything, and remains alone. Then he struggles with God (Gen 32:24-25). At this point Ambrose does not mention traditional interpretation of Israel, for he had already introduced it at the beginning of the second book of the work, noting that «the faithful people had taken their name from his name Israel, because he contemplated God with the internal eyes of the mind».¹⁰⁴

Jerome, on the other hand, rejected this etymology, explaining in detail why the name could not mean «mind seeing God», and had offered instead the interpretation, *princeps cum Deo*.¹⁰⁵ This is probably the reason why the Philonic interpretation of the name change from Jacob to Israel never enjoyed the same popularity in the Latin West that it enjoyed in the East. Nevertheless the use of the two names to describe the ideal development of the spiritual life including the two phases of the practical and the contemplative life can be found later, notably in Paschasius Radbertus in the ninth century.¹⁰⁶ This may be due to the influence of Cassian.

99 AMBROSE, *De Cain et Abel* 1,6. (CSEL 32,1:360): *Itaque talibus mota elegit studia uirtutis, quibus Jacob uir plenus exercitationis mentem intendit suam. Et idea ouium pastor inducitur; eo quod imperitare corpori et sensibus eius ac uoluptatibus, uotique modum tenere, ne uelut ouis uagetur incerta, praestantius aestimatur, quam regere populos, uel praesse urbibus. Difficilius enim quispiam se, quam alterum regit. Animum uincere, iracundiam cohibere, compugnantesque leges carnis et mentis in unum cogere immortalis cuiusdam est uiri quem inferni porta non ceperit.*

100 AMBROSE, *Jac.* I,2,5-8 (CSEL 32,2:6-9).

101 AMBROSE, *Jac.* I,2,5 (CSEL 32,2:6)

102 AMBROSE, *Jac.* I,2,7 (CSEL 32,2:8).

103 AMBROSE, *Jac.* II,5,28-29 (CSEL 32,2:48-49).

104 AMBROSE, *Jac.* II,1,3

105 JEROME, *Liber hebraicarum quaestionum in Genesim* 32 (CCL 72,41). The relative dating of the two works is uncertain. Jerome's work has been dated to 389/391 by J.N.D. KELLY, *Jerome. His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, New York 1975, 153. Ambrose's *De Jacob* has been dated as early as 386 but the precise date is uncertain. See SANT'AMBROGIO, *Opere esegetiche* 3. *Giacobbe e la vita beata*, tr. R. Palla (Opera omnia di Sant'Ambrogio 3), Roma 1982, 215-216.

106 PASCHASIUS RADBERTUS, *Expositio in Matheo*. lib. 1, 2459 (CCL 56): *Nam et idem patriarcha primum Iacob deinde Israhel recte dicitur. Quia eadem caritas antea per labores uitia supplantans uitam practicam complexatur postea namque per contemplationem Deum*

One more Latin author prior to Cassian needs to be mentioned because of the possible influence on one detail of Cassian's interpretation. Prudentius gives an interpretation of the laming of Jacob similar to that we have already noted in Cassian.¹⁰⁷

8. CONCLUSION

From what has been cited thus far, it is obvious that at the end of the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth century the interpretation of the names Jacob and Israel to refer to two stages or aspects of the spiritual life was widely diffused in the east but by no means absent from the west as well. Cassian, who undoubtedly became familiar with it in the east, was not the first to bring it to the west but he does seem to be the first Latin writer to use it to describe the entire course of the spiritual life. It would be difficult to isolate Cassian's sources for his use of the interpretation. He was probably familiar with it from a variety of sources including Origen and Eusebius. It was very likely quite common in the verbal catechesis of the monastic circles with which Cassian was acquainted in Egypt. It cannot be excluded that he was acquainted with the texts of Philo. Many other writers of the epoch including Didymus, Jerome, and Ambrose were.¹⁰⁸ The texts of Philo and the earlier Christian writers continued to inspire new elaborations of the interpretation. The principle of interpreting the Scriptures by means of the Scriptures allowed the traditional interpretation to be combined with or reinterpreted by new texts. The role of *lectio divina* in monastic life guaranteed that through this spiritual exercise the text would continue to be a vehicle for the transmission of and instruction in this conception of the spiritual life which had its roots not only in the biblical tradition but in the Hellenistic philosophical world of Alexandria.

facie ad faciem sicuti est certissime perfruetur. 177 Quae ideo recte maior appellatur quia tempore prior est propter eruditionem diuine uoluntatis quamuis illa merito antecellat propter aspectum diuine pulchritudinis.

107 PRUDENTIUS, *Cathemerinon* II, 73-92 (CCL 126,9). *Sub nocte Iacob caerulea, luctator audax angeli, eo usque dum lux surgeret, sudauit in par proelium; sed cum iubar claresceret, lapsante claudus poplite femurque uistus debile culpa uigorem perdidit. Nutabat inguen saucium, quae corporis pars uilior longeque sub cordis loco diram fouet libidinem.* See above p. 316.

108 For the most recent and comprehensive survey of the influence of Philo on early Christian writers, see D.T. RUNIA, *Philo in Early Christian Literature. A Survey* (Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum), Minneapolis 1993.

THE CONTROVERSY OVER ΑΠΑΘΕΙΑ. CASSIAN'S SOURCES AND HIS USE OF THEM

It has often been remarked that the term ἀπάθεια is missing from the works of John Cassian where, given his propensity to insert Greek terminology, one might have expected to find it.¹ Cassian's failure to use *apatheia* has been attributed to the polemical climate resulting from the Pelagian controversy and in particular to Jerome's intemperate attack in his Letter 133 to Ctesiphon on Evagrius' use of the term. It has even been suggested that because of Jerome's attack, Cassian deliberately avoided using philosophical terminology in presenting this key element of Evagrius' thought on the spiritual life.² Although this document is undoubtedly a key element in the picture, we believe that a closer examination of the various texts and terminology may lead to somewhat different and more complex conclusions.

JEROME'S LETTER 133 TO CTESIPHON

Jerome's regrettable Letter 133 provides a convenient starting point for an attempt to unravel the complexities of this controversy. In the letter written in 414, he stated, as is well known, that :

Evagrius of Iberius in Pontus, who wrote to virgins, who wrote to monks, who wrote to her who, with her name that means «black», confirms the darkness of her perfidy, has published a book and sentences περὶ ἀπαθείας, a term that we can render with «impassibility» or «imperturbability,» that which the soul possesses when it is never disturbed by any thought or vice, and, to say it in two words, puts it in the position of being either a stone or God. Many are devouring

1 S. MARSILI, *Giovanni Cassiano ed Evagrio Pontico. Dottrina sulla carità e contemplazione* (SA 6), Rome 1936, 115, n. 1; ÉVAGRE LE PONTIQUE, *Traité pratique ou Le Moine I*, ed. A. Guillaumont - C. Guillaumont (Sch 170), Paris 1971, 103, n. 6; C. STEWART, «From logo to verbum. John Cassian's Use of Greek in the Development of a Latin Monastic Vocabulary», in *The Joy of Learning and the Love of God. Essays in Honor of Jean Leclercq* (Cistercian Studies Series), Kalamazoo 1995, 20-21; S.D. DRIVER, *The Reading of Egyptian Monastic Culture in John Cassian*, Toronto 1994, 127.

2 A. GUILLAUMONT, *Les «Kephalaia Gnostica» d'Evagre le Pontique et l'histoire de l'origénisme chez les Grecs et les Syriens*, Paris 1962, 79, n. 132.

these books in Greek in the east and in Latin in the west through the translation of his disciple Rufinus.³

Jerome returned to this attack on Evagrius in two other works written shortly after Letter 133, his *Commentary on Jeremiah*,⁴ and the *Dialogue Against the Pelagians*. In these he enlarged and made more explicit the charge that *apatheia* or «impassibility» is tantamount to «impeccability» and attributed the teaching that one could achieve this state of sinlessness (and thus equality with God - *aequalitatem dei*) to Origen as well.⁵ Whereas in Letter 133 he had asserted that Pelagius held that one could be *sine peccato* or *absque peccato* (equated with the Greek *anamarteton*),⁶ he now seems to have invented a new word, *inpeccantia*,

3 The translation is my own. *Epist.* 133,3 (CSEL 56, 246): *euagrius ponticus hiborita, qui scribit ad uirgines, scribit ad monachos, scribit ad eam, cuius nomen nigredinis testatur perfidiae tenebras, edidit librum et sententias περὶ ἀπαθείας, quam nos «inpassibilitatem» uel «inperturbationem» possumus dicere, quando numquam animus ulla cogitatione et uitio commouetur et - ut simpliciter dicam - uel saxum uel deus est. huius libros per orientem graecos et interpretante discipulo eius rufino latinos plerique in occidente lectitant.*

4 In *Hieremiam prophetam libri vi*, lib. 4, (CSEL 49, 221) *cur hoc principio, frater eusebi, usus sim, sequens sermo monstrabit. multis et de toto huc orbe confluentium turbis et sanctorum fratrum monasterii que curis occupatus commentarios in hieremiam per interualla dictabam, ut, quod deerat otio, superesset industriae, cum subito heresis pythagorae et zenonis ἀπαθείας et ἀναμάρτησίας, id est «inpassibilitatis» et «inpeccantiae», quae olim in origene et dudum in discipulis eius grunnio euagrio que pontico et iouinianio iugulata est, coepit reuiuere et non solum in occidente, sed et in orientis partibus sibilare et in quibusdam insulis, praecipue que siciliae et rhodi, maculare plerosque et crescere per dies singulos, dum secreto docent et publice negant.*

5 *Dialogi contra Pelagianos*, prol. 1 (CCL 80): *nulli enim dubium, quin stoicorum et peripateticorum, hoc est ueteris academiae, ista contentio sit, quod alii eorum asserant πάθη, quas nos perturbationes possumus dicere, aegritudinem, gaudium, spem, timorem, eradicari et exstirpari posse de mentibus hominum, alii frangi, regi atque moderari, et quasi infrenes equos quibusdam lupatis coerceri. quorum sententias et tullius in tusculanis disputationibus explicat et origenes ecclesiasticae ueritati in stromatibus suis miscere conatur, ut praeteream manichaeum, priscillianum, euagrium hiboritam, iouinianum et totius paene syriae haereticos, quos sermone gentili διεστραμμένους, id est peruerse, massalianos, graece εὐχίτας uocant quorum omnium ista sententia est, posse ad perfectionem, et non dicam similitudinem, sed aequalitatem dei humanam uirtutem et scientiam peruenire, ita ut se asserant ne in cogitatione quidem et ignorantia, cum ad consummationis culmen ascenderint, posse peccare.*

6 *Epist.* 133, 3, (CSEL 56, 244, 1.22): *nihil noui adserunt, qui in huiusce modi sibi adplaudentes perfidia simplices quidem indoctos que decipiunt, sed ecclesiasticos uiros, qui in lege dei die ac nocte meditantur, decipere non ualent. pudeat eos principium et sociorum suorum, qui aiunt posse hominem sine peccato esse, si uelit - quod graece dicunt ἀναμάρτητον - et quia hoc ecclesiarum per orientem aures ferre non possunt, simulant se «sine peccato» quidem dicere, sed ἀναμάρτητον dicere non audere, quasi aliud sit «absque peccato» et aliud ἀναμάρτητον et non graecum sermonem, qui apud illos conpositus est, duobus uerbis sermo latinus ex-*

to translate *anamarteton*, which he equates with *apatheia*.⁷ Our purpose here is not to exculpate Evagrius or Origen from these unfounded charges but to understand how Jerome could have arrived at them. The notion of *apatheia* was hardly new even in Christian circles but it had not previously been equated with «sinlessness» in the sense that one would be immune to sin.⁸ Those who have investigated this question until now have tended to ask the question whether or not Jerome was justified in his charges and conclusions and to investigate the notion of *apatheia* in the Greek philosophical and patristic tradition. A better question might be, how did he arrive at these conclusions?⁹ What should caution against seeking an explanation for this controversy in the Greek tradition is the fact that it was exclusively Latin. The term continued to be used in the Greek Christian tradition without hesitation.

The key to this puzzle may lie partially in the Latin translations to which Jerome refers in Letter 133 and which he attributes to Rufinus. These have not

presserit. si «absque peccato» dicis et ἀναμάρτητον te dicere diffiteris, damna ergo eos, qui ἀναμάρτητον praedicant. sed non facis.

- 7 The word *inpeccantia* is not found earlier in Latin and in this period occurs only in Jerome and Cassian. The Greek *anamarteton* is not found in Latin texts earlier than Letter 133 and then in texts clearly under the influence of Jerome: Augustine's *De gratia Christi et de peccato originali* 2,11 (written 418); *Questiones in Heptateuchum* 5, Quest. Deut. 52 (written 419); OROSIUS, *Liber apologeticus contra Pelagianos* 16,3; and Cassian's *Conference* 23. On the error of this identification of sinlessness with *apatheia*, see G. DE PLINVAL, *Pélage. Ses écrits, sa vie et sa réforme*, Lausanne 1943, 273-274; J.N.D. KELLY, *Jerome. His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, New York 1975, 315; B.R. REES, *Pelagius. A Reluctant Heretic*, Woodbridge 1988, 8, 86, 94.
- 8 On the subject of *apatheia* in general and the history of the concept, one may consult: G. BARDY, «Apatheia», in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 1, Paris 1937, 727-746; M.-P. ENGELMEIER, «Apathie», in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Basel-Stuttgart 1971, 429-433; C. JOEST, «Die Bedeutung von akedia und apatheia bei Evagrius Pontikos», *Studia Monastica* 35 (1993) 7-53; P. DE LABRIOLLE, «Apatheia», in *Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum* 1, Stuttgart 1950, 484-487; P. LAMMA, «Apatia», in *Enciclopedia Filosofica*, Firenze 1967, 373-374; S. LILLA, «Apatheia», in *Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiane*, Casal Monferrato 1983, 265-266; S. LILLA, *Clement of Alexandria*, Oxford 1971, 99-112; T. ŠPIDLÍK, *La Spiritualité de l'Orient Chrétien (Manuel systématique)* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 206), Roma 1978, 261-270; T. ŠPIDLÍK, «Apatheia», in *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione* 1, Roma 1974, 714-715.
- 9 See A. Guillaumont in ÉVAGRE LE PONTIQUE, *Traité pratique ou Le Moine*, ed. A. Guillaumont - C. Guillaumont (SCh 170), Paris 1971, 98-112; E.A. CLARK, *The Origenist Controversy. The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, Princeton 1992, 221-227; C. MORESCHINI, «Girolamo tra Pelagio e Origene», *Augustinianum* 26 (1986) 207-216. The latter does ask the question how Jerome arrived at these conclusions but tends to restrict it to whether he was justified in attributing such ideas to Origen.

been given sufficient attention. There exist two Latin translations of Evagrius' work *Sententiae ad Monachos* and two of the work *Ad Virginem*.¹⁰ The work described by Jerome as «sentences *peri apatheias*» has been assumed to be the *Liber Practicus* but no Latin translation is known to have survived, if indeed there ever was one.¹¹ The translations of the *Ad Monachos* are, however, of considerable interest for understanding Jerome's attack. It has been demonstrated by Leclercq that the two translations known to exist are not in fact independent of each other but one (H) represents a revision or reworking of the first (A).¹² The grammar of the first is less correct than the second but it is more respectful of the Greek turns of phrase, in short, more literal. The term *πρακτικός* is rendered as *actuosus* or *actualis* by (A), which is the Latin equivalent in both the Christian and non-Christian tradition of the early centuries and used especially by Cassian, but has been replaced by the second (H) with a variety of phrases such as *bene agens*, *bene operatrix*, *operator boni*, *actor bonorum*.¹³ Most important for our purposes here is the fact that in both translations the word *ἀπαθεία*, found seven times in this work and once in the *Ad Virginem*, is rendered in Latin consistently by *impassibilitas*. This represents a new departure in the Latin tradition.

IMPASSIBILIS IN THE LATIN THEOLOGICAL TRADITION

The word *impassibilis* (as equivalent to *ἀπαθείς*) had been used previously in the Christian Latin literature from Tertullian onwards chiefly in the context of discussion about the nature of God, of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, to indicate

10 The Greek text was published by H. GRESSMAN, *Nonnenspiegel und Mönchsspiegel des Euagrius Pontikos* (TU 39), Leipzig 1913, 143-165. The Latin versions of both works in the edition of Holstenius are found in Migne, PG 40, 1277-1286 = PL 20, 1181-1186. A second version of the *Ad Virginem* was published by A. WILMART, «Les versions latines des sentences d'Evagre pour les vierges», *Revue Bénédictine* 28 (1911) 143-153. A distinct and earlier version (A) of the *Ad Monachos* was published by J. LECLERCQ, «L'ancienne version latine des sentences d'Evagre pour les moines», *Scriptorium* 5 (1951) 195-213.

11 ÉVAGRE LE PONTIQUE, *Traité pratique ou Le Moine*, ed. A. Guillaumont - C. Guillaumont (Sch 170, Paris 1971, 99.

12 J. LECLERCQ, «L'ancienne version latine des sentences d'Evagre pour les moines», *Scriptorium* 5 (1951) 199. Wilmart had expressed the opinion that the form of the text printed by Holstenius (H) and reprinted in Migne represented a conflation of two versions but Leclercq's more precise analysis shows that H is a good witness to a distinct version based on A.

13 LECLERCQ, «L'ancienne version latine», 200-201.

the absence of or incapability of suffering.¹⁴ It had never been used in classical Latin. Rufinus had in fact translated ἀπαθής as *impassibilis* in this sense.¹⁵ The cases where *impassibilis/ impassibiliter/ impassibilitas* were used of human beings, on the other hand, are quite rare. A few of these are attributable to Rufinus. Thus in his translation of Origen's Homily 2 on Psalm 37, Rufinus used *impassibiliter* to indicate that one who makes an accusation justly must do it without passion (*impassibiliter*).¹⁶ In his translation of Homily 1 on Psalm 38, he used *impassibilitas* as a divine attribute, which, however, the just man will imitate. He will not be subject to pain or be stimulated by injuries or reproofs.¹⁷ This is not quite the same as the way it is used in the translation of Evagrius where it is a state or quality that the monk seeks to attain.

There are other cases where Rufinus either omits the word ἀπάθεια or translates it differently. Two of these are found in the *Historia Monachorum*. In the discourse of John of Lycopolis the phrase «but seek through askesis to achieve passionlessness with regard to the desires» (ἀλλὰ περᾶσθαι δι' ἀσκήσεως τὴν τῶν ὀρέξεων ἀπάθειαν κτήσασθαι) is simply missing from the Latin version. This is a very good example since it corresponds with the teaching of Evagrius. In the other case, a teaching of Apollo, the word is translated by the paraphrase *nulla vobis passio* rather than by the expression *impassibilitas*.¹⁸ Here too the teaching

14 *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* 1, Leipzig 1934, 522.

15 See ORIGEN, *PArch* 2,4,4; *Rec. Clem.* 3,9; Basil, *hom.* 6,1 (= CPG 2859; Rufino di Aquileia, *Omellie di Basilio di Cesarea tradotte in Latino*, tr. A. Salvini, Napoli 1998, 224); ORIGEN, *HomLev* 3,1.

16 ORIGENE, *Omellie sui salmi* (36, 37, 38), ed. E. Prinzivalli, Firenze 1991, 300-301: Intellego enim quia qui recte arguit, impassibiliter debet arguere ut salutem exspectet eius qui arguitur, non vindictam.

17 ORIGENE, *Omellie sui salmi*, 338-339: An tamquam divina natura per impassibilitatem, neque sensus doloris ullatenus recipit neque ullis aut iniuriis aut conviciis excitatur? Talis ergo erit, immo imitabitur talem omnis perfectus et iustus, qualis erat ille qui dicebat: «maledicimur et benedicimus, persecutionem patimur et sustinemus, blasphemati deprecamur». (1 Cor 4:12-13).

18 *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* 8.99 (=8.15): τεκμήριον δέ, φησίν, ὑμῖν ἔστω ἐν τῇ τῶν ἀρετῶν προκοπῇ, ὅταν τὴν ἀπάθειαν καὶ τὴν ἀνορεξίαν κτήσησθε· ἀρχὴ γὰρ τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ χαρισμάτων ἐστὶ ταῦτα. = Lat. VII,4,3: Hinc autem, dicebat, sciatis vos proficere in virtutibus, si nulla vobis passio fuerit erga mundana desideria. Hoc enim est initium donorum dei. On the question of the authorship of this work, see E. SCHULZ-FLÜGEL, *Rufinus. Historia Monachorum* (Patristische Texte und Studien 34), Berlin 1990, 46-48; A. DE VOGÜÉ, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'Antiquité. 3. Le monachisme latin. Jérôme, Augustin et Rufin au tournant du siècle (391-405)* (Patrimoine chrétien), Paris 1996, 318-319. The Greek text is from: A.-J. FESTUGIÈRE, *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*, Brussels 1961.

corresponds to that of Evagrius. There is yet another case where Rufinus can be shown to have omitted the word ἀπάθεια. In a comment on Rom 7:8 found in the Greek fragment 38R, Origen seems to suggest the possibility of acquiring *apatheia* through diligence but this has simply been omitted in the Latin version.¹⁹ It would seem therefore that Rufinus, as well as other Christian authors, had a noticeable reluctance to use the terminology of *apatheia* understood as *impassibilitas* other than of God.

This may also help us to understand how Jerome arrived at the idea that *impassibilitas* means that one is either equal to God or is God, as he states in Letter 133, even if one finds the judgement quite mistaken. It may also not be out of place to doubt whether or not Rufinus was the translator of these little works of Evagrius. The observations of Leclercq with regard to the grammar and the literal style do not accord well with what is known of Rufinus's style of translation.²⁰ One may conclude that Jerome's attribution of the translations to Rufinus may have been conjectural but not entirely without reason. By the year 414 Rufinus was certainly known to have been the principal translator of Greek theological works into Latin (apart from Jerome himself).

APATHEIA IN THE PREVIOUS LATIN PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL TRADITION

Cicero

The fact that the terminology of *impassibilis/impassibilitas* had rarely been applied to human beings in the Latin theological tradition does not mean, however, that the concept of *apatheia* had been missing. Although Cicero, to whom must go the credit for establishing a Latin philosophical vocabulary, introduced a range of new words to express ideas found in the Greek philosophical tradi-

19 οὐκ ἐν Παύλῳ μόνῳ ἀλλ' ἐν πάσῃ ψυχῇ, ὅτε ἡ ἁμαρτία ὑπέστη, πᾶσα ἐπιθυμία κατεπολέμει τὸ γένος· ἀμήχανον γὰρ ἀνθρωπίνην ψυχὴν μὴ ὑποπείσειν πάθεσι, κἂν ἐξ ἐπιμελείας ὕστερον οἶονεν ἐν ἀπαθείᾳ γένηται. The text is found in A. RAMSBOTHAM, *Journal of Theological Studies* 14 (1912/13) 14. See also ORIGENE, *Commento alla Lettera ai Romani 1-2*, ed. - tr. F. Cocchini ("Ascolta Israele". Commenti alle Scritture dalle tradizioni ebraica e cristiana, 2-3), Genova 1985-86, 333, n.44. Cocchini notes that Rufinus has omitted the Stoic terminology, thus confirming the findings of Bardy, (G. BARDY, *Recherches sur l'histoire du texte et des versions latines du «De Principiis»*, Paris 1923, 120) that Rufinus tends to leave out philosophic aspects in his translations. For the Latin text, see PG 14, 1081C.

20 see n. 12 above and SCHULZ-FLÜGEL, *Rufinus. Historia Monachorum*, 39-45.

tion, he did not use or transliterate into Latin the word ἀπάθεια.²¹ Rather he described the concept in a variety of ways. In the third book of the Tusculan Disputations, he stated that the function of the mind (*animus*) is to make good use of reason and therefore it is never disturbed (*perturbatus*).²² In a discussion of the virtue of temperance (σωφροσύνη), he explained that he called it sometimes temperance, (*temperantia*) and sometimes moderation (*moderatio*) but that in his opinion the right word for it was *frugalitas*. But then he went on to say that the Latin term indicated every form of integrity and that in his opinion *frugalitas* was the result of the virtues of fortitude, justice and prudence (*fortitudinem, iustitiam, prudentiam*). Its specific function is to regulate the violent impulses of the soul and to maintain a state of equilibrium (*constantia*) in it.²³ Whoever has this virtue, or is moderate and temperate must also have equanimity and whoever has equanimity is also internally at peace and whoever is at peace is free from all disturbance and affliction.²⁴ Speaking specifically of the vice of anger, Cicero observed that the mind (*animus*) of the wise man is always immune to alteration and is never inflated or inflamed.²⁵

Cicero did introduce the word πάθος into his discussion, explaining it with the Latin words *perturbatio* and *morbus*, and noting that it referred to any disorderly movement in the soul.²⁶ In the fourth book of the Tusculan Disputations, in the context of a discussion of the different views of Chrysippus and the Peripatetics on the subject of the passions, Cicero is asked by his interlocutor to explain more clearly than the Greeks do the subject of the passions. He answers that, to explain what the Greeks call πάθη and what he prefers to call

21 For the concept of *apatheia* in Cicero, see M.L. COLISH, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages. 1. Stoicism in Classical Latin Literature* (Studies in the History of Christian Thought 34), Leiden 1985, 142-143. However, Colish does not discuss Cicero's terminology and one could even get the impression that he uses the Greek term, which he does not.

22 *Tusc. III,7,15: Munus autem animi est ratione bene uti; et sapientis animus ita semper adfectus est, ut ratione optime utatur; numquam igitur est perturbatus.*

23 *Tusc. III,8,17: Eius enim videtur esse proprium motus animi adpetentis regere et sedare semperque adversantem libidini moderatam in omni re servare constantiam.*

24 *Tusc. III,8,18: Qui sit frugi igitur vel, si mavis, moderatus et temperans, eum necesse est esse constantem; qui autem constans, quietum; qui quietum, perturbatione omni vacuum, ergo etiam aegritudine.*

25 *Tusc. III,9,19: Sapientis autem animus semper vacat vitio, numquam turgescit, numquam tumet.*

26 *Tusc. III,10,23: Hoc propemodum verbo Graeci omnem animi perturbationem appellant; vocant enim πάθος, id est morbum, quicumque est motus in animo turbidus.*

perturbationes rather than *morbos*, he will follow the division of the soul into two parts as taught by Pythagoras and Plato. In the rational part of the soul they place tranquillity (*tranquillitas*), that is, a state of peace and equilibrium (*id est placidam quietamque constantiam*).²⁷ This is a perfect description of the idea of *apatheia*. In the other part are the disorderly movements of the passions. According to Zeno, says Cicero, πάθος or *perturbatio* is an irrational emotion and contrary to nature.²⁸ The Stoics hold that all the passions (*perturbationes*) derive from prejudices and false ideas.²⁹ The wise man is one who, thanks to his moderation and equilibrium, is tranquil in spirit and at peace with himself.³⁰ He is able to achieve immunity not only from affliction but from all the other passions as well. Happiness is achieved when the soul is emptied of the passions but when it becomes excited and does not follow the guide of reason, it loses its equilibrium and health.³¹

From this it can be seen that Cicero does not have a single word that corresponds to *apatheia*. Rather he uses a variety of expressions and descriptions, the most frequent of which involve tranquillity (*tranquillitas*), interior peace (*quietus*), equilibrium (*constantia*), and being emptied of passions (*perturbationibus vacuus animus*). Cicero, on the other hand, avoids confusing this state of *tranquillitas* with insensibility (ἀναισθησία). Although he agrees with the Stoic view that pain is not an evil (the only real evil is the moral one), pain is felt and

27 Tusc. IV,5,10: *Quoniam, quae Graeci πάθη vocant, nobis perturbationes appellari magis placet quam morbos, in his explicandis veterem illam equidem Pythagorae primum, dein Platonis descriptionem sequar, qui animum in duas partes dividunt: alteram rationis participem faciunt, alteram expertem; in participem rationis ponunt tranquillitatem, id est placidam quietamque constantiam, in illa altera motus turbidos cum irae tum cupiditatis, contrarios inimicosque rationi.*

28 Tusc. IV,6,11: *Est igitur Zenonis haec definitio, ut perturbatio sit, quod πάθος ille dicit, aversa a recta ratione contra naturam animi commotio. Quidam brevius perturbationem esse appetitum vehementiorem, sed vehementiorem eum volunt esse, qui longius discesserit a naturae constantia.*

29 Tusc. IV,7,14.

30 Tusc. IV,17,37: *Ergo, hic, quisquis est, qui moderatione et constantia quietus animo est si-bique ipse placatus, ut nec tabescat molestiis nec frangatur timore nec sitienter quid expetens ardeat desiderio nec alacritate futili gestiens deliquescat, is est sapiens quem quaerimus, is est beatus, cui nihil humanarum rerum aut intolerabile ad demittendum animum aut nimis laetabile ad efferendum videri potest.*

31 Tusc. IV,17,38: *Quod qui faciet, non aegritudine solum vacabit, sed etiam perturbationibus reliquis omnibus. His autem vacuus animus perfecte atque absolute beatus efficit, idemque concitatus et abstractus ab integra certa-que ratione non constantiam solum amittit, verum etiam sanitatem.*

it brings suffering. Suffering is without doubt painful, bitter, contrary to nature and difficult to bear with patience.³² Even Hercules, for whom death meant achieving immortality, suffered pain.³³ Cicero also recounts how his teacher Posidonius, when visited by Pompey, was suffering gravely from arthritis. They discussed the thesis that there is no good beneath the moral one and Posidonius, though in pain, would not admit that pain was an evil.³⁴ Before leaving Cicero, it may be noted that he does not use the word *passio* for the Greek πάθος. *Passio* appears to be a later word found first in Apuleius and used chiefly by Christian writers.³⁵

Seneca

Writing close to a hundred years after Cicero, Seneca was probably of equal importance in establishing Latin philosophical vocabulary, especially since he was the only avowed Stoic to write in Latin. In his only explicit discussion of the meaning of the word *apatheia*, Seneca notes that one risks a misunderstanding if one tries to translate the word with a single Latin word, especially if that is *impatientia*, since this could mean the opposite of the Greek word.³⁶ For that reason it is better to speak of a soul (or «mind» = *animus*) that is invulnerable or beyond passion. Seneca insists, however, that this does not mean that the sage is insensitive. He wishes to have friends but is able to bear loss with serenity (*aequo animo*).³⁷ The latter phrase is clearly intended to convey the content of *apatheia*. In another context Seneca states explicitly that this serenity is not that of a stone.³⁸ There can be no virtue where nothing is felt.

32 *Tusc.* II,7,18: *Si fortis est in perferendo officio satis est; ut laetetur etiam, non postulo. Tristis enim res est sine dubio, aspera, amara, inimica naturae, ad patiendum tolerandumque difficilis.*

33 *Tusc.* II,8,20-9,22.

34 *Tusc.* II,25,61.

35 See *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* s.v.

36 *Ep.* 9,2: *In ambiguitatem incidendum est, si exprimere ἀπάθεια uno verbo cito voluerimus et impatientiam dicere; poterit enim contrarium ei quod significare volumus intellegi. Nos eum volumus dicere qui respuat omnis mali sensum: accipietur is qui nullum ferre possit malum. Vide ergo num satius sit aut invulnerabilem animum dicere aut animum extra omnem patientiam positum.*

37 *Ep.* 9,5: *Ita sapiens se contentus est, non ut velit esse sine amico sed ut possit; et hoc quod dico «possit» tale est: amissum aequo animo fert.*

38 *Dial. (De constantia sapientis)* 2,10,4: *Alia sunt quae sapientem feriunt, etiam si non peruerunt, ut dolor corporis et debilitas aut amicorum liberorumque amissio et patriae bello*

Elsewhere Seneca uses other expressions to describe this concept. In a discussion of the passion of anger, where he invokes the example of the tight-rope walker to insist that one can make progress in combatting the passions, he uses the phrase *immota tranquillitas* to describe the prize that is sought.³⁹ In fact he uses the word *tranquillitas* often, either alone or in combination with other phrases, to describe this notion. Thus, in the context of a discussion of Epicurus' views on the highest good, Seneca asks what could be added to a soul that is imperturbable (*animus constat sibi et placidus*) and tranquil.⁴⁰ To the question «what constitutes happiness,» Seneca answers that it is security and perpetual tranquillity, which are given to the soul by *magnitudo* and *constantia bene iudicati tenax* (holding firm to right judgement).⁴¹ Examples of the use of *tranquillitas* could be multiplied at length, especially in the Letters.⁴²

As did Cicero, so also Seneca uses the notions of equilibrium (*constantia*) and freedom from passion (*imperturbatus*) to render the concept of *apatheia*. Seneca rejects the Peripatetic view, however, insisting that the passions must be eradicated not moderated.⁴³ It is easier to eradicate them than to regulate them, he argues. It is absurd to admit the possibility of vice coexisting with virtue. If we are not in a position to prevent the passions from rising, we will not be able to regulate the intensity of them either.⁴⁴

flagrantis calamitas: haec non nego sentire sapientem; nec enim lapidis illi durtiam ferriue adserimus. Nulla uirtus est quae non sentias perpeti.

39 *Ira* II,12,6: *nos non advocabimus patientiam, quos tantum praemium exspectat, felicitis animi immota tranquillitas?*

40 *Ep.* 66, 45: *Animus constat sibi et placidus est: quid accedere ad hanc tranquillitatem potest?* Compare this formulation with the very similar one of Cicero in n. 28.

41 *Ep.* 92,3: *Quid est beata vita? securitas et perpetua tranquillitas. Hanc dabit animi magnitudo, dabit constantia bene iudicati tenax. Ad haec quomodo pervenitur? si veritas tota perspecta est; si servatus est in rebus agendis ordo, modus, decor, innoxia voluntas ac benigna, intentia rationi nec umquam ab illa recedens, amabilis simul mirabilisque. Denique ut breviter tibi formulam scribam, talis animus esse sapientis viri debet qualis deum deceat.*

42 See for example, *Ep.* 56,6; 75,18; 95,57.

43 *Ep.* 85,2-3: «*Qui prudens est et temperans est; qui temperans est, et constans; qui constans est imperturbatus est; qui imperturbatus est sine tristitia est; qui sine tristitia est beatus est; ergo prudens beatus est, et prudentia ad beatam vitam satis est*». 3. *Huic collectioni hoc modo Peripatetici quidam respondent, ut imperturbatum et constantem et sine tristitia sic interpretentur tamquam imperturbatus dicatur qui raro perturbatur et modice, non qui numquam.*

44 *Ep.* 85,12: *Si in nostra potestate non est an sint adfectus, ne illud quidem est, quanti sint: si ipsis permisisti incipere, cum causis suis crescent tantique erunt quanti fient.*

Ambrose

From this brief survey of the two principal authors of the Latin philosophic tradition, it is clear that educated persons in the fourth and fifth centuries would have had ample opportunity to be acquainted with the discussion of the notion of *apatheia* whether or not they were able to read the texts of the Greek tradition directly. A good case in point is Ambrose, who had an excellent knowledge of Greek and frequently introduced Greek terminology into his writings, but never used the word *apatheia*, although he certainly uses the concept.⁴⁵ When it is a question of an attribute of God, he uses some form of *impassibilis*.⁴⁶ When it is a question, on the other hand, of a human attribute, he tends to use *tranquillitas* either alone or in some combination. It is often clear from the context, in which *tranquillitas* represents freedom from *perturbationes*, *cogitationes* or *passiones*, that we are dealing with the concept of *apatheia*.⁴⁷ The one who is truly rich possesses this inner peace.⁴⁸ In an allegorical explanation of the «Canaanites,»

45 On the subject of *apatheia* in Ambrose, one may consult M.L. COLISH, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages. 2. Stoicism in Christian Latin Thought through the Sixth Century* (Studies in the History of Christian Thought 35), Leiden 1985, 54-57. However, she does not deal with the Latin terminology in sufficient detail for our purposes.

46 *Hexaemeron*, dies 2, cap. 1, 2: *Fecit igitur deus caelum et terram et ea quasi auctor esse praecepit, non tamquam figurae inuentor, sed tamquam operator naturae. Nam quomodo sibi conueniunt operatoria impassibilis dei uirtus et passibilis materiae natura tamquam altera ab altera quo indiguerint mutuantur?*

Ennarationes in XII Psalmos davidicos, psalmus: 37, cap. 19, 2: *non enim deus passioni patet, ut irascatur, cum sit impassibilis; sed quia uindictat, uidetur irasci.*

De fide ad Gratianum, lib. 1, cap. 10: *Non haec sunt in deo corporalibus aestimanda: inconpraehensibiliter generatur filius, impassibiliter generat pater, et tamen ex se generat et ante omnem intellectum generat ut deus uerus deum uerum.*

47 *De bono mortis*, cap. 4, 15: *opus est ut constanter transeas: transitus autem a corruptione ad incorruptionem, a mortalitate ad immortalitatem, a perturbationibus ad tranquillitatem. non igitur te nomen mortis offendat, sed boni transitus beneficia delectent. Exp. Ps. 118, littera 17, 14: uidentur quidem habere tranquillitatem, uidentur quiete frui, sed non est quies ubi animus inquietus est, non est tranquillitas mentis ubi animus exagitur obnoxiae stimulis conscientiae. quomodo securitas, ubi diuersarum pugna est passionum, ubi conflictus grauium concitationum? Exp. Ps. 118, littera 21, 16: supra diximus, quia caritas excludit timorem, nunc dicimus, quia excludit omnem perturbationem. etenim qui deum diligit, profunda est in eo confirmatae mentis tranquillitas. aqua, inquit, multa excludere non poterit caritatem et flumina non inundabunt eam. multa aqua diuersarum est passionum et flumina saecularium cupiditatum corporalibus motibus incitata, quae tamen murum caritatis subuertere non possunt.*

48 *Epistulae*, lib. 2, epist. 10 (Maur. 38), 3: *Nonne tibi uidetur dives qui habet pacem animi, tranquillitatem quietis, ut nihil concupiscat, nullis exagitetur cupiditatum procellis nec vetera fastidiat et nova quaerat et semper desiderando fiat in summis diuitiis inops?*

Ambrose also employs the words *constantia*, *serenitas* and *placidus* to express this notion.⁴⁹ The «Canaanites» represent the opposite. In a letter to Simplicianus, Ambrose explains that the sage possesses equilibrium and is always the same in his spirit.⁵⁰ He remains unmovable (*inmobilis*) in his emotions.⁵¹

Ambrose's treatment of the figure of Jacob is of particular interest, for here he is following in the path of Philo who had interpreted Jacob as the type of the spiritual athlete who struggles against the passions through *askesis*.⁵² Ambrose of course Christianizes Jacob as the figure of perfect virtue by combining *tranquillitas* with the peace of Christ mentioned in John 14:27 and Phil 4:7.⁵³ It is typical of the perfect that they are not moved by the events of this world but maintain their spirit unchanged (*mentem immobilem*).⁵⁴ It is a great thing to remain tranquil internally and at peace with oneself. It is in fact a greater achievement to resist the passions of the flesh and the disturbances of the soul than the external peace achieved by the battles of the emperor against the bar-

49 *De Cain et Abel*, lib. 1, cap. 10, 42: *Cum igitur in eorum terram fueris ingressus, quos adu-
ertis propter leuitatem et inquietudinem instabilitatem que morum possessione deiectos, tu te-
neto constantiam. Non te uilis ratio, leuis sermo perturbet - hoc est enim Chananaeus, mobilis
sermo, affectus instabilis et inquieta contentio -, sed magis tranquillitatem cordis et animi
serenitatem placidus seruato, ut tamquam in salo maris tutam nauibus stationem portu quo-
dam tuae mentis exhibeas.... 44. Expulsis igitur inquietis et mobilibus cogitationibus dabit
tibi deus uacuam possessionem cordis et mentis, ut eam cultu quodam tranquillitatis exerceas
et fructum ex ea capias nec sustineas in eam Chananaeos, hoc est turbidos sensus recurrere,
eradices gentilicium uitiorum omne consaeptum, lucos eorum diruas, quibus obumbratur ue-
ritas et quidam liber caelestis uisus cognitionis horrore tenebrosae disceptationis absconditur.*

50 *Epistulae*, lib. 2, 7 (Maur. 37): *Vbi enim sapientia, ibi uirtus animi, ibi constantia et forti-
tudo. Sapiens ergo idem est animo, non minuitur, non augetur rerum mutationibus, nec ut
«paruulus fluctuat, ut circumferatur omni uento doctrinae», sed manet perfectus in Christo,
«fundatus caritate», «radicatus» fidei.*

51 *Epistulae*, lib. 2, 20: *sed immobilis maneat adfectu.*

52 For the texts where Philo treats this subject and the history of the interpretation, see M. SHERIDAN, «Jacob and Israel. A Contribution to the History of an Interpretation», in this volume, 315-334.

53 *Jac.* II,7,28. *Denique petiturus a fratre concordiam dormiuit in castris* (Gen 32:21-22). *Per-
fecta uirtus habet tranquillitatem et stabilitatem quietis; ideo dominus donum eius perfectio-
ribus reseruauit dicens: Pacem meam relinquo uobis. Pacem meam do uobis* (John 14:27).

54 *Jac.* II,7,28: *Perfactorum est enim non tacile mundanis moueri, non turbari metu, non exagi-
tari suspitione, non terrore concuti, non dolore uexari sed quasi in litore tutissimo aduersum
insurgentes fluctus saecularium procellarum mentem immobilem fida statione placidare. Hoc
firmamentum Christianis mentibus Christus inuexit, pacem internam inuehens animis pro-
batorum, ut non turbetur cor nostrum neque exagitetur animus.*

barians.⁵⁵ Ambrose also combines this notion with that of purifying the heart. This brings one closer to the image and likeness of God and makes one an imitator of God.⁵⁶ One may conclude from his use of the terminology found in Cicero and Seneca that Ambrose was well acquainted with that tradition as well as with the texts of Philo.

Jerome

Compared with the orderly and consistent use of the tradition by Ambrose, Jerome's polemical and confused outbursts are dismaying. Jerome's inconsistency with regard to the philosophical tradition has long been noted.⁵⁷ In seeking to associate diverse philosophical opinions and quite distinct heretical currents Jerome is following in the tradition of, indeed citing, Tertullian.⁵⁸ In Letter 133 and in the similar passages in the *Dialogue against the Pelagians* and the *Commentary on Jeremiah*, there are many elements that could be analyzed but here our comments will be restricted to those points that seem to have influenced Augustine, and to which Cassian may be seen to be reacting.

We have noted above the passage of Letter 133 in which Jerome attacks the notion of *apatheia* and associates it with Evagrius and Rufinus. At the beginning of the Letter he had already mentioned the word πύθη, noting that in Latin they can be called *perturbationes* and charged that the followers of Pelagius (and implicitly all who strive for *apatheia*) are aiming to be equal to God (*dei sibi non*

55 Jac. II,7,29: *Grande est intra se aliquem tranquillum esse et sibi conuenire. Foris pax aut imperatoris sollicita prouidentia aut manu militum quaeritur aut bellorum prospero cedit euentu aut internicione aliqua barbarorum, si in se hostili motu sua arma conuertant. In ea pace nulla nostra uirtus, sed euentus est. Certe gloria pacis illius ad imperatorem refertur, istius pacis fructus in nobis est. quae est in mentibus singulorumque tenetur affectibus. Istius pacis maior est fructus, quo spiritalis nequitiae temptamenta quam quo arma hostilia repelluntur. Ista pax sublimior, quae corporalium passionum excludit inlecebras perturbationesque mitigat quam ea quae barbaricos sedat incursus; plus est enim clauso intra te hosti resistere quam remoto.*

56 Jac. II,7,30. *Itaque Iacob, qui cor suum ab omni simultate mundauerat et pacificum affectum gerebat, postquam reiecit omnia sua, solus remansit et luctatus est cum deo (Gen 32, 23-25). Quicumque enim saecularia neglegit ad imaginem dei similitudinemque propius accedit. Quid est enim luctari cum deo nisi uirtutis suscipere certamen et cum superiore congrredi potioreque ceteris imitatore fieri dei?*

57 See COLISH, *The Stoic Tradition* 2, 72-76.

58 For the phrases «et haereticorum patriarchae philosophi» and «Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis?», see TERTULLIAN, *Adversus Hermogenem*, ch. 8 (PL 2,228) and *De praescriptione haereticorum*, ch. 7 (PL 2, 22-23).

dicam similitudinem sed aequalitatem), that they aim to extirpate the passions completely, including joy (*gaudium*), that they seek to do this through meditation and the assiduous exercise of virtue (*meditatione et adsidua exercitatione uirtutum*) and that this is tantamount to a desire to live without a body (*hoc est enim hominem ex homine tollere et in corpore constitutum esse sine corpore*).⁵⁹ Although Jerome invokes Cicero at this point against the Stoics (and in the *Dialogue Against the Pelagians* refers explicitly to the *Tusculan Disputations*), his comments lack the precision of Cicero, who had explained clearly the different opinions of the Stoics and the Peripatetics with regard to the passions.⁶⁰ In particular it should be noted that Cicero used *laetitia* and not *gaudium* in reference to the disordered passion to be combatted.⁶¹ *Laetitia* was understood to be irrational unrestrained excitement beyond a reasonable measure while *gaudium* was a rational joy that belonged traditionally to the Stoic concept of the *eupatheia*. In an earlier period Jerome himself had made this distinction, observing that the Stoics differentiated them.⁶² Of course he claimed that the proper joy (*gaudium*) was a gift of the Holy Spirit. But in 414 Jerome was now an old and bitter man despite his wide renown. It may be that his memory did not serve him well. In any case, this confusion of terminology (obliterating the distinction of the πάθη and the εὐπάθειαι) allowed him to claim that the goal of *apatheia* was in effect insensibility, the removal of all emotion or feeling. A closer reading of Cicero and of Seneca, as we have seen above, would have prevented this misunderstanding. But Jerome's objective at this point was clearly not historical objectivity, even if he had been capable of it, but rather to discredit opponents.

The translation of *apatheia* as *impassibilitas* in the little works of Evagrius had, as we have noted, allowed Jerome to claim in effect that this was a divine

59 *Epist.* 133,1: *quae enim potest alia maior esse temeritas quam dei sibi non dicam similitudinem sed aequalitatem uindicare et breui sententia omnium hereticorum uenena conplecti, quae de philosophorum et maxime pythagorae et zenonis, principis stoicorum, fonte manarunt? illi enim, quae graeci appellant pavq̃h, nos perturbationes possumus dicere, aegritudinem uidelicet et gaudium, spem et metum, quorum duo praesentia, duo futura sunt, adserunt extirpari posse de mentibus et nullam fibram radicem que uitiorum in homine omnino residere meditatione et adsidua exercitatione uirtutum. aduersum quos et peripatetici, qui de aristotelis fonte descendunt, fortissime disputant et academici noui, quos tullius sequitur, et eorum non dico res - quae nullae sunt - sed umbras et uota subuertunt. hoc est enim hominem ex homine tollere et in corpore constitutum esse sine corpore et optare potius quam docere dicente apostolo: miser ego homo, quis me liberabit de corpore mortis huius?*

60 *Tusc.* IV,5,9.

61 *Tusc.* IV,6,12.

62 *Comm. Gal.* 3,5 (PL 26: 447B-C); see COLISH, *The Stoic Tradition* 2, 76 on this point.

prerogative, and that to aim at it was to seek to be equal to God. He repeats this claim in the passage following the assault on Evagrius, where he continues the attack on Rufinus for having translated the *Sentences of Sextus* and for having attributed them to a bishop of Rome. These contain in fact, he asserts, the doctrine of the Pythagoreans who make man equal to God (*qui hominem exaequant deo*).⁶³ At the same time, however, he equates *impassibilitas* with *inperturbatio*, a term used frequently by Seneca for *apatheia*, as we have seen previously. His use of the phrase *meditatione et assidua exercitatione uirtutum* (meditation and the assiduous practice of virtue) was also misleading, for it tended to discredit the key concept of *askesis*. These were similar to terms that had been used by Seneca to render this typically Greek notion.⁶⁴

The effect of Jerome's attack, for those unable to check the sources themselves, was to leave the impression that the goal of *apatheia* (*inperturbatio*) was equivalent to aiming at being equal to God, that it was in effect blasphemous and heretical, since it could not be achieved, that it was in any case, inhuman and that the exercises by which one sought to achieve it were also to be discredited. Jerome's attack had an immediate effect upon Augustine in whom it found a sympathetic recipient.

Augustine

In the year 418 Augustine published Books 11-14 of his magistral work *The City of God*.⁶⁵ In Book 14 he asserted: «that state which in Greek is called *apatheia* (which could be translated in Latin as *impassibilitas*), to be understood in the sense that one lives without these emotions (since it is a question of the soul and not of the body), which condition the reason and disturb the conscience, is good and highly desirable but also not of this life». ⁶⁶ Augustine's terminology here (*quae si latine posset impassibilitas diceretur*) is sufficiently close to that of Jerome

63 *Epist.* 133,3.

64 See *Ira* II,12 where Seneca uses *assidua meditatio*, *disciplina*, and *pertinacis studii* in the context of the exercises necessary for removing the passion of anger. He makes a comparison with the training that one must engage in to become a tight-rope walker.

65 It seems clear that Book 14 was composed or at least finished in 418. See SANT'AGOSTINO, *La Città di Dio* 2 (*Libro XI-XVIII*), ed. D. Gentili - A. Trapè, Roma 1988, 7-8.

66 *Civ.* 14,9,4. *quocirca illa, quae ἀπάθεια graece dicitur (quae si latine posset impassibilitas diceretur), si ita intellegenda est (in animo quippe, non in corpore accipitur), ut sine his affectionibus uiuatur, quae contra rationem accidunt mentem que perturbant, bona plane et maxime optanda est, sed nec ipsa huius est uitae.*

in Letter 133 (*quam nos «inpassibilitatem» uel «inperturbationem» possumus dicere*) that one may conclude that he wrote it under the influence of the latter. In fact, as we have already noted, there was, with the exception of the translation of Evagrius' *Ad monachos*, no previous equation of this sort in Latin patristic literature and the term *inpassibilitas* was unknown in classical literature. Augustine had of course used the word *inpassibilitas* previously but only in the context of divine attributes.⁶⁷ He had also, as we shall see, discussed the concept of *apatheia* previously but had not linked it with *inpassibilitas* nor with sinlessness.

In 418 Augustine did not repeat Jerome's polemic against Evagrius or Rufinus nor did he repeat the slur against meditation and the practice of virtue nor the explicit attack on the Pelagians. On the other hand he does equate the notion of *apatheia* with sinlessness as Jerome had done. He also equates it with insensibility, the absence of *affectus*, and asserts that this would be worse than all the vices.⁶⁸ At the same time he admits that if it is considered to be the absence of fear and sadness, but not of love and joy (*gaudium*), then it can be considered desirable but attainable only in the life to come.⁶⁹

Further on in the same discussion Augustine restates this position in the context of his major theme, the contrast between the two cities, that of God and that of man. He insists that all these emotions (*omnes affectos istos*) remain part of the life of those who live according to the spirit, the citizens of the city of God, while they remain in this exile. And he concludes with a ringing condemnation of those who claim otherwise. The citizens of the earthly city who appear to dominate the passions are swollen with pride, which is worse than the passions they succeed in controlling. Those who do succeed in not allowing themselves to be excited and stimulated nor depressed and cast down in reality only lose their humanity rather than achieve true tranquillity (*tranquillitas*).⁷⁰

67 See *De musica* 6 (PL32,1190-1191); *Epist.* 170,8 (CSEL 44,628).

68 *Civ.* 14,9,4: *tunc itaque ἀπάθεια ista erit, quando peccatum in homine nullum erit. nunc uero satis bene uiuitur, <si> sine crimine; sine peccato autem qui se uiuere existimat, non id agit, ut peccatum non habeat, sed ut ueniam non accipiat. porro si ἀπάθεια illa dicenda est, cum animum contingere omnino non potest ullus affectus, quis hunc stuporem non omnibus uitiiis iudicet esse peiorem?*

69 *Civ.* 14,9,4: *potest ergo non absurde dici perfectam beatitudinem sine stimulo timoris et sine ulla tristitia futuram; non ibi autem futurum amorem gaudium que quis dixerit, nisi omni modo a ueritate seclusus? si autem ἀπάθεια illa est, ubi nec metus ullus exterret nec angit dolor, auersanda est in hac uita, si recte, hoc est secundum deum, uiuere uolumus; in illa uero beata, quae sempiterna promittitur, plane speranda est.*

70 *Civ.* 14,9,6: *et si quos ciues habet, qui moderari talibus motibus et eos quasi temperare uideantur, sic impietate superbi et elati sunt, ut hoc ipso sint in eis maiores tumores, quo minores*

In support of this position Augustine had already cited his own treatment of the passions in Book 9 of the same work (finished by the year 417).⁷¹ Here, in the context of a discussion of whether or not the demons are subject to the passions, Augustine had explained that there were two principal philosophical opinions with regard to the passions. Some, the Platonists and the Aristotelians, hold that the passions can be found in the soul of the sage but reduced in measure and held in check by reason. Others, the Stoics, hold that they are not to be found at all in the soul of the sage. The latter, he says, refuse to consider the passions a good, because for them only virtue can be considered a good. The Platonists, on the other hand, consider them a good but an insignificant one. Augustine concludes the difference among these schools is one of words rather than of concepts.

In any case, he asserts, there is at best a minimal difference between the philosophical schools on this point and both insist that the mind of the sage is immune to the dominion of the passions. To illustrate his point he introduces from Aulus Gellius a traditional story of the sage who turns pale during a storm at sea. The explanation for this is that the mental representations or *phantasias* do not depend on us and thus they can disturb even the soul of the sage, but the difference between the sage and the ignorant person is that the latter gives consent to these passions while the sage does not.⁷² The mind that is firmly convinced that virtue is the only true good does not permit the passions (*perturbationes*), even if they are they are found in the lower part of the soul, to prevail against reason.⁷³

dolores. et si nonnulli tanto inmaniore, quanto rariore uanitate hoc in se ipsis adamauerint, ut nullo prorsus erigantur et excitentur, nullo flectantur atque inclinentur affectu: humanitatem totam potius amittunt, quam ueram adsequuntur tranquillitatem.

71 For the dating see, SANT'AGOSTINO, *La Città di Dio 1 (Libro I-X)*, ed. A. Trapè - R. Russell - S. Cotta - tr. D. Gentili, Roma 1978, xvi-xvii.

72 *Civ. 9,4,2: in eo libro se legisse dicit a- gellius hoc stoicis placuisse, quod animi uisa, quas appellant phantasias nec in potestate est utrum et quando incidant animo, cum ueniunt ex terribilibus et formidabilibus rebus, necesse est etiam sapientis animum moueant, ita ut paulisper uel pauescat metu, uel tristitia contrahatur, tamquam his passionibus praeuenientibus mentis et rationis officium; nec ideo tamen in mente fieri opinionem mali, nec adprobari ista eis que consentiri. hoc enim esse uolunt in potestate id que interesse censent inter animum sapientis et stulti, quod stulti animus eisdem passionibus cedit atque adcommodat mentis adsensum; sapientis autem, quamuis eas necessitate patiat, retinet tamen de his, quae adpetere uel fugere rationabiliter debet, ueram et stabilem inconcussa mente sententiam.*

73 *Civ. 9,4,3: ita mens, ubi fixa est ista sententia, nullas perturbationes, etiamsi accidunt inferioribus animi partibus, in se contra rationem praeualere permittit; quin immo eis ipsa dominatur eis que non consentiendo et potius resistendo regnum uirtutis exercet.*

At this point Augustine introduces a contrast between what the philosophers teach and what the Scriptures teach. These consider the mind as submitted to the order and help of God and the passions in the measure and limit of the mind, that these may be turned to the advantage of righteousness (*iustitia*). In Christian teaching one does not ask so much whether the mind gets angry as why it gets angry. This is true as well of the other passions. For example, compassion (*miser cordia*), which is nothing else than the participation of our sentiment in the unhappiness of the others, helps us to go to their aid. This movement is useful to the reason when compassion acts as an aid to justice, both to contribute to the aid of the one in need and to pardon the repentant. Therefore Cicero considered it a virtue while the Stoics inserted it among the vices. Yet these (the Stoics) admit that the passions exist in the soul of the sage, although they declare him immune to all the vices. It follows that they do not consider the passions to be vices when they are not an obstacle to virtue and the rational control of the mind. Therefore the doctrine of the Peripatetics, the Platonists and the Stoics is identical. Augustine finishes by noting that, according to the Scriptures, even God gets angry, although he is not disturbed by any passion.

The reference back to Book 9 of *The City of God* had been to support his contention that, according to Sacred Scripture and sound doctrine, the citizens of the holy city of God fear, desire, sorrow, and rejoice, and, because their love is correct, they do so rightly.⁷⁴ In Book 9 Augustine had simply ignored the Stoic distinction between the passions (πάθη) and the εὐπάθειαι (or between disordered and ordered emotions), a distinction that would have made it impossible for him to identify the passions (πάθη, *perturbationes*) with emotions in general (*affectiones vel affectus*).⁷⁵ In Book 14, however, he takes note of the fact that the Stoics make this distinction. His source for this is Cicero and he reports that Cicero had called the εὐπάθειαι *constantias*, explaining that in the soul of the sage there are to be found three of these: instead of desire, will, instead of exhilaration, joy, instead of fear, caution, but there is nothing that corresponds to sorrow in the soul of the sage.⁷⁶ He repeats in summary that, according to Cicero, there

74 Civ. 14,9,1: *apud nos autem iuxta scripturas sanctas sanam que doctrinam ciues sanctae ciuitatis dei in huius uitae peregrinatione secundum deum uiuentes metuunt cupiunt que dolent gaudent que et quia rectus est amor eorum, istas omnes affectiones rectas habent.*

75 Civ. 9,4,1. See note 72 above. Colish refers to this as «the debater's strategy» (COLISH, *The Stoic Tradition* 2, 224).

76 Civ. 14,8,1: *quas enim graeci appellant εὐπαθειας, latine autem cicero constantias nominauit, stoici tres esse uoluerunt pro tribus perturbationibus in animo sapientis, pro cupiditate uoluntatem, pro laetitia gaudium, pro metu cautionem; pro aegritudine uero uel dolore, quam nos*

are three *constantias* and four *perturbationes*, which, he says, many prefer to call *passiones*.⁷⁷ Augustine observes that this distinction appears to correspond to certain usages in the Scriptures, but in the end he insists, basing himself both on Scriptural passages and on Virgil, that the distinction will not hold up, since both good and evil men rejoice. What distinguishes them is not the specific emotion but right or perverse will.⁷⁸ Thus for Augustine the Stoic teaching on the εὐπάθειαι cannot be used to save the concept of *apatheia* from his condemnation.

Although Augustine had not previously associated the concept of *apatheia* with the notion of *impassibilitas* (nor made it equivalent to sinlessness?), this was not the first time that he had dealt with the topic nor the first time that he had insisted on its impossibility for Christians. It has been argued that Augustine considerably revised his opinions on this subject in the course of the years, having begun with a much more favorable view of the possibility of achieving freedom from the passions. Much earlier he had been able to use the traditional Latin terminology of *mens immobilis* and *tranquillitas animi* in a positive light.⁷⁹ It is not our purpose here, however, to trace the development of Augustine's thought on the subject nor to account for the reasons that lead him to adopt a very negative view on the subject, but rather to present his position as Cassian would have had to confront it as he began to compose his own works.

Before the year 418 Augustine had already dealt with the concept of *apatheia* in a very negative manner. In his great commentary on the Gospel of John composed in the years 406-407, when speaking of the passion of Christ, who truly suffered in mind and body, Augustine exclaims: «Down with the arguments of the philosophers who deny that the wise man can suffer perturbations of the

uitandae ambiguitatis gratia tristitiam maluimus dicere, negauerunt esse posse aliquid in animo sapientis.

77 Civ. 14,8,1: *et illas tres esse constantias, has autem quattuor perturbationes secundum ciceronem, secundum autem plurimos passiones. graece autem illae tres, sicut dixi, appellantur εὐπάθειαι; istae autem quattuor πάθη.* It may be noted in passing that the word *passio* is not attested in Latin in the time of Cicero.

78 Civ. 14,8,2-3: *gaudium uero eos et in malo posuisse ille ipse uergilianus testis est uersus, ubi has quattuor perturbationes summa breuitate complexus est: hinc metuunt cupiunt que dolent gaudent que. dixit etiam idem auctor: mala mentis gaudia. proinde uolunt cauent gaudent et boni et mali; atque ut eadem aliis uerbis enuntiemus, cupiunt timent laetantur et boni et mali; sed illi bene, isti male, sicut hominibus seu recta seu peruersa uoluntas est. ipsa quoque tristitia, pro qua stoici nihil in animo sapientis inueniri posse putauerunt, reperitur in bono et maxime apud nostros.*

79 On this subject see COLISH, *The Stoic Tradition* 2, 221-223 and the articles cited therein.

soul».⁸⁰ The Christian should not deny his sufferings but should see himself as a member of the head who truly suffered and transformed our sufferings. Like his Lord the Christian should feel fear, sorrow, desire and joy in regard to the salvation of others. Augustine then delivers himself of a judgment on the Stoic doctrine similar to that of the year 418:

These are certainly four of what they call passions: fear and sorrow, love and joy. And the minds of Christians have just cause for feeling them, if not the Stoic philosophers and whoever like them agrees with this error. For they indeed enlarge their vanity to the extent that they deem it a verity, thus regarding insensibility as soundness, ignoring that the soul of man, just as the members of his body, is the more gravely ill when it has lost even the capacity to feel pain.⁸¹

Here already *apatheia* is equated with insensibility. As we have already had ample opportunity to note, this is simply not accurate from the point of view of the historical tradition. But Augustine was not alone in this erroneous identification. One of his sources, Aulus Gellius, had made the same error.⁸²

Cassian

There were now at least five significant works in Latin, three by Jerome and two by Augustine, in which the notion of *apatheia* had been roundly condemned. In some ways the condemnation by Augustine was more significant, since his theo-

80 *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*, 60, 3: *turbatus est ergo potestatem habens ponendi animam suam, et potestatem habens iterum sumendi eam. turbatur tam ingens potestas, turbatur petrae firmitas; an potius in eo nostra turbatur infirmitas? ita uero! nihil indignum credant serui de domino suo, sed agnoscant se membra in capite suo. qui mortuus est pro nobis, turbatus est idem ipse pro nobis. qui ergo potestate mortuus est, potestate turbatus est; qui transfigurauit corpus humilitatis nostrae conforme corpori gloriae suae, transfigurauit etiam in se affectum infirmitatis nostrae, compatiens nobis affectu animae suae. proinde quando turbatur magnus, fortis, certus, inuictus, non ei timeamus quasi deficiat; non perit, sed nos quaerit. nos, inquam, nos omnino sic quaerit; nos ipsos in illius perturbatione uideamus, ut quando turbamur, non desperatione pereamus. quando turbatur qui non turbaretur nisi uolens, eum consolatur qui turbatur et nolens. pereant argumenta philosophorum, qui negant in sapientem cadere perturbationes animorum.*

81 *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*, 60, 3: *istae sunt certe quatuor quas perturbationes uocant, timor et tristitia, amor et laetitia. habeant eas iustis de causis animi christiani, nec philosophorum stoicorum, uel quorumcumque similium consentiat error; qui profecto quemadmodum uanitatem existimant ueritatem, sic stuporem deputant sanitatem, ignorantes sic hominis animum, quemadmodum corporis membrum, desperatius aegrotare, quando et doloris amiserit sensum.* The translation is that of COLISH, *The Stoic Tradition* 2, 224.

82 AULUS GELLIUS, *Noct. att.* 12,5,10; 19,12. See COLISH, *The Stoic Tradition* 1, 337.

logical authority was greater and he was fast becoming the norm of orthodoxy in the west. On the other hand, Jerome had established himself as an authority on monasticism through his numerous works on the subject including many letters and the lives of Paul, Malchus and Hilarion.⁸³

The cumulative effect of these assaults on the concept of *apatheia* by two of the best known and most influential Christian writers of the day was to brand as erroneous at best or heretical at worst a central and indispensable teaching of the Christian ascetical tradition as it had been developed from Philo to Evagrius. This was the situation that Cassian faced as he began to compose his own works on the spiritual life. Those in the west who would have been in a position to dispute the affirmations of Jerome and Augustine would have been few indeed. From the point of view of Cassian, it can only be seen as a disastrous situation, for, as he explained at the beginning of the first Conference,

It is for this end - to keep our hearts continually pure - that we do and endure everything, that we spurn parents and home and position and wealth and comfort and every earthly pleasure. If we do not keep this mark continually before the eyes, all our travail will be futile waste that wins nothing, and will stir up in us a chaos of ideas instead of singlemindedness. Unless the mind has some fixed point to which it can keep coming back and to which it tries to fasten itself, it will flutter hither and thither according to the whim of the passing moment and follow whatever immediate and external impression is presented to it.⁸⁴

This «fixed point» is precisely the concept of *apatheia*, which Cassian introduces as «purity of heart». The composition and plan of the whole of Cassian's work must be seen in the light of this negative situation. The thirteenth

83 For a description of these works and their influence one should see now especially A. DE VOGÜÉ, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'Antiquité 1-3* (Patrimoines christianisme), Paris 1991-1996.

84 *Conl. 1.V: Quidquid ergo nos ad hunc scopon, id est puritatem cordis potest dirigere, tota uirtute sectandum est, quidquid autem ab hac retrahit, ut perniciosum ac noxium deuitandum. Pro hac enim uniuersa agimus atque toleramus, pro hac parentes, patria, dignitates, diuitiae, deliciae mundi huius et uoluptas uniuersa contemnitur, ut scilicet puritas cordis perpetua retineatur. 4. Hac itaque nobis destinatione proposita semper actus nostri et cogitationes ad eam obtinendam rectissime diriguntur. Quae si prae oculis nostris iugiter statuta non fuerit, non solum cunctos labores nostros uacuos pariter atque instabiles reddens in cassum eos ac sine ullo emolumento compellet effundi, sed etiam cogitationes omnes diuersas sibi contrarias suscitabit. Necesse est enim mentem quo recurat cuius principaliter inhaereat non habentem per singulas horas atque momenta pro incursuum uarietate mutari atque ex his quae extrinsecus accedunt in illum statum continuo transformari qui sibi primus occurrerit.* The English translation is by O. CHADWICK, *Western Asceticism*, Philadelphia 1958, 197-198.

Conference was and is seen as a veiled critique of Augustine, but in reality the whole of the Institutes and the Conferences should be viewed as an attempt to counteract the negative presentation of Augustine and Jerome. The problem for Cassian was how to present the classical teaching in an intelligible way in the face of this negative publicity. His approach was pedagogical.⁸⁵ He chose not to engage in polemic nor to answer it on the level of theory, at least at the beginning. Rather he sought first to present the teaching concretely in the context of a discussion of each of the individual vices using the schema developed by Evagrius of Pontus. Already in the preface to the Institutes he emphasizes the importance, indeed the indispensability, of experience for understanding what this is all about, suggesting that those who had written previously had spoken of what they had heard rather than of what they had experienced.⁸⁶ This is a surprisingly strong statement in view of that fact that he had just mentioned Basil and Jerome among those who had already written on the subject of monasticism. However, when one compares Cassian's orderly and lucid exposition with these previous writings, it is hardly an exaggeration.

Cassian introduces the concept of *apatheia* as «purity of heart» in the context of an exhortation by the abbot Pinufius on the occasion of the entrance of a candidate into the monastery. It comes at the end of a little summary of the first stages of the spiritual life, which include fear of the Lord, compunction of heart, renunciation, humility, mortification of the will, elimination of the vices and growth in virtues. Thus is acquired purity of heart through which one possesses perfect charity.⁸⁷ This serves as a transition and introduction to the eight books that follow on each of the eight principal vices, in which the candidate for monastic life is led to understand concretely what is meant by purity of heart.

85 See S.D. Driver, *The Reading of Egyptian Monastic Culture in John Cassian*, Toronto 1994, 133: who rightly notes that «Cassian instead offered a new model of Latin monastic literature. He called for a reciprocity between reading and praxis that went far beyond the demand, common at the time, to practice the principles espoused in the text».

86 *Inst. praef. 7: et ea, quae omnimodis intacta relictasunt ab anterioribus nostris, utpote qui audita potius quam experta describere temptauerunt, uelut rudi monasterio et in ueritate sitientibus intimabo.*

87 *Inst. 4,43: Principium nostrae salutis ac sapientiae secundum scripturas timor Domini est. De timore Domini nascitur compunctio salutaris. De compunctione cordis procedit abrenuntiatio, id est nuditas et contemptus omnium facultatum. De nuditate humilitas procreatur. De humilitate generatur mortificatio uoluntatum. Mortificatione uoluntatum exstirpantur atque marcescunt uniuersa uitia. Expulsione uitiorum uirtutes fruticant atque succrescunt. Pullulatione uirtutum puritas cordis acquiritur. Puritate cordis apostolicae caritatis perfectio possidetur.*

The concept of *apatheia* had long been associated with purification and purity of heart. The notion of the purification of the soul from the passions through philosophy is already clearly present in Plato.⁸⁸ Philo of Alexandria had interpreted numerous biblical texts in this sense and had introduced the notion of *apatheia* as the goal to be sought through purification of the soul from the passions.⁸⁹ Christian authors, particularly Clement and Origen had interpreted the beatitude «Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God» (Matt 5:8) in terms of purification of the soul and *apatheia*.⁹⁰ The ideas are closely associated also in the writings of Evagrius of Pontus, who sometimes places them in parallel.⁹¹ Thus Cassian was not substituting a biblical term for a philosophical one. The equation of the two concepts was firmly established in the previous tradition, at least in Greek. Although the use of the phrase *puritas cordis* in this sense in Latin before Cassian is found rarely, it is present in Ambrose.⁹²

There is no doubt that Cassian's principal term for designating the concept of *apatheia* is *puritas cordis*. Whether or not he deliberately avoided the Greek term *apatheia* is uncertain. As we have seen, the word had rarely been discussed in Latin and had never been Latinized as had so many other Greek words. What is certain is that Cassian deliberately associated the concept of *puritas cordis*

88 PLATO, *Phaedo* 82c.

89 See especially *Leg.* II,94-102 and *Mut.* 81-85. For additional texts, see J. RAASCH, «The Monastic Concept of Purity of Heart and its Sources 3. Philo Clement of Alexandria and Origen», *Studia Monastica* 10 (1968) 8-13.

90 For lists of texts, see RAASCH, «The Monastic Concept of Purity of Heart», 13-55.

91 See especially: *Sententiae ad monachos* 44-45 (καθαρῆς καρδίας = *mundo corde* in Latin trans.), 65-67, 105-107, *Scholia in Proverbia* 63,3; 191,2; 199,1; 247; *Letter* 56, (in W. FRANKENBERG, *Evagrius Ponticus* (Abhandlung der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, Neue Folge, Band xiii, no. 2), Berlin 1912; *Scholia in psalmos* (=CPG 2455) 17,21 (PG 12, 1232D). For the attribution of this last text to Evagrius rather than to Origen, see M.-J. RONDEAU, «Le commentaire sur les Psaumes d'Evagre le Pontique», *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 26 (1960) 331.

92 AMBROSE, *Abr.* II,9: *diuersi ergo domini in seruitute nos uolunt tenere: incessit diabolus, infestant angeli eius, passiones motus que corporis uelut domestici atque intestini hostes inquietant. foris pugnae, intus timores, foris pugnae, intus cupiditates. aliena est enim interni corporis substantia puritati cordis et ideo inpugnat uel certe repugnat. bellum ergo cotidianum est et intra castra eadem graue proelium, donec deus misericors diabolum atque eius ministros iudicet, passiones restinguat ac subiciat menti sedulae, exquirat animas nostras de omnibus offensionis et periculi nostri auctoribus, qui ait: sanguinem animarum ueststrarum exquiram de manibus omnium bestiarum.* This passage closely parallels a passage of Philo, *QG* III,10. Ambrose's use of Philo is well known. See SANT'AMBROGIO, *Opere esegetiche. Abramo*, ed. F. Gori (Opera omnia di Sant'Ambrogio 2/II), Roma 1984, 215. In another passage Ambrose places together: *pax animi, puritas cordis, caritas mentis*. See *Exp. Luc.* 5, 259.

with the traditional Latin philosophical terminology that had been used for the Greek concept *apatheia*.

Of these terms the most important and frequent is *tranquillitas*. Sometimes Cassian combines it with purity of heart in the same way in which we find *apatheia* combined with purity of heart in the Greek tradition. Thus, for example, whatever could disturb the purity and tranquillity of our mind (*mentis nostrae puritatem tranquillitatemque*) is to be avoided.⁹³ Here, as elsewhere, *mens* is a synonym for *cor*. Similarly he affirms that just as nothing is more damaging than anger, nothing is more precious than tranquillity of soul and perpetual purity of heart (*tranquillitate animi ac perpetua cordis sui iudicans puritate*).⁹⁴ On occasion the adjective *tranquillus* is used in parallel together with the adjective *purus* (*tranquillo ac puro cordis contempletur intuitu*).⁹⁵ Elsewhere *tranquillitas* is used in place of *puritas* as in the phrase «interior tranquillity of heart» (*interiore cordis tranquillitate*)⁹⁶ or «peace of soul and tranquillity of the heart (*quies animae cordisque tranquillitas*)».⁹⁷ The phrase *tranquillitas mentis* is also used as the exact equivalent of *puritas cordis* as can be seen in Conference 18 when Abbot Piamun explains that our enemies are within us and that where our domestic enemies are not offering resistance, there the kingdom of God is acquired through tranquillity of mind. In the first Conference Cassian had made it clear that purity of heart is the indispensable goal at which one must aim in order to obtain the prize of the kingdom of God.⁹⁸

Particularly worthy of note is the combination of *tranquillus* or *tranquillitas* with *immobilis*. At the end of the last book of the Institutes, which has dealt with the vice of pride, Cassian affirms that for the monk who has fought this

93 *Conl.* 1.VII.4: *Quidquid igitur potest istam mentis nostrae puritatem tranquillitatemque turbare, quamuis utile ac necessarium uideatur, ut noxium deuitandum est. Hac enim norma et errorum peruagationumque omnium dispersiones poterimus euadere et desideratum finem linea certae directionis adtingere.*

94 *Conl.* 19.XIV.7: *nihil dispendiosius iracundia nec pretiosius tranquillitate animi ac perpetua cordis sui iudicans puritate, ob quam non solum carnalium, sed etiam illarum quae spiritales uidentur rerum spernenda sunt commoda, si alias adquiri uel perfici nisi cum huius tranquillitatis perturbatione non possunt.*

95 *Conl.* 12.VII.3.

96 *Conl.* 16.XXII.3

97 *Conl.* 19.VI.5.

98 *Conl.* 18.XVI.4: *Sicut enim regnum dei intra nos est, ita inimici hominis domestici eius. Nemo enim mihi magis quam sensus meus, qui mihi est uere intimus domesticus, aduersatur. Et idcirco si fuerimus solliciti, ab intestinis hostibus laedi minime poterimus. Vbi enim nobis nostri domestici non aduersantur, ibi et regnum dei in tranquillitate mentis adquiritur.*

vice there will follow a state of humility that is *tranquillus atque immobilis*.⁹⁹ This is a precise description of *apatheia* toward which all the struggles against the vices have been tending. Similarly, in the context of the goal of perpetual prayer, Cassian speaks of the immovable tranquillity of mind and perpetual purity (*immobilem tranquillitatem mentis ac perpetuam puritatem*) for which all ascetical exercises are undertaken.¹⁰⁰ The phrase «immovable tranquillity of heart» and «immovable tranquillity of mind» are also used elsewhere.¹⁰¹ This usage cannot but recall to mind Seneca's phrase *immota tranquillitas*.¹⁰²

Seneca had also used *immobilis* alone to describe the ideal of *apatheia*¹⁰³ and he had used it together with *constantia* to render the same idea.¹⁰⁴ Likewise Ambrose, as previously noted, had used *immobilis* in the context of the attacks of passion.¹⁰⁵ Cassian too uses it both alone and with other words to describe the state of *apatheia*. Job is the great example of one who remains *immobilis* in the face of all imaginable disasters.¹⁰⁶ The perfect man remain *immobilis* in the face

99 *Inst.* 12.32.1: *In qua consistentibus qualitate procul dubio status ille humilitatis uere tranquillus atque immobilis subsequetur, ut nosmet ipsos inferiores omnibus iudicantes uniuersa, quae nobis fuerint inrogata, tametsi iniuriosa sint uel tristia uel damnosa, tamquam a superioribus nostris inlata patientissime toleremus.*

100 *Conl.* 9.II.1: *Omnis monachi finis cordisque perfectio ad iugem atque indisruptam orationis perseuerantiam tendit, et quantum humanae fragilitati conceditur, ad immobilem tranquillitatem mentis ac perpetuam nititur puritatem, ob quam omnem tam laborem corporis quam contritionem spiritus indefesse quaerimus et iugiter exercemus.*

101 *Conl.* 15.X.3: *tranquillitatem tui cordis immobilem*; *Conl.* 19.XI.2: *tranquillitatem nos mentis immobilem.*

102 See note 39 above.

103 Seneca, *Dial.* 7.16.1.3: *Ergo in uirtute posita est uera felicitas. Quid haec tibi uirtus suadebit? ne quid aut bonum aut malum existimes quod nec uirtute nec malitia continget; deinde ut sis immobilis et contra malum <et> ex bono, ut qua fas est deum effingas.*

104 Seneca, *Dial.* 12.2.3.4: *eneruauit longa felicitas, et ad leuissimarum iniuriarum motus conlabantur: at quorum omnes anni per calamitates transierunt, grauissima quoque forti et immobili constantia perferant.* See also *Ep.* 87.4.8.

105 Ambrose, *Expositio Psalmi CXVIII*, 4.21: *ideo que confirmari se petit in uerbis [suis] propheta, ne moueantur pedes eius, ne effundantur gressus eius. quae, si quis recto uigeat corde, non patitur, sed radicans atque fundatus aduersus omnes passionum fluctus immobilis perseuerat.* See also note 54 above.

106 *Conl.* 6.IV.2: *Denique cum beato Iob diabolus adhibitis uniuersis nequitiae suae machinis malum hoc peccati uoluisset inferre ac non solum cunctis eum facultatibus spoliasset, uerum etiam post illum de morte septem filiorum tam atrocem tamque insperatum orbitatis dolorem uulnere eum pessimo a capitis uertice usque ad plantam pedum et intolerandis cruciatibus onerasset, nequaquam ei peccati maculam quiuit infligere, quia in cunctis immobilis perseuerans nullum blasphemiae adcommodauit adensum.*

of the temptations that come from good fortune or from bad.¹⁰⁷ In the context of the virtue of patience, he uses it in parallel with the term *tranquillitas*.¹⁰⁸ He also uses it to describe or modify the virtue of patience of the famous monks who had to receive so many visitors in the desert.¹⁰⁹ Again he uses it together with *constantia* giving as an example the famous monk Paphnutius and insisting that these virtues can be maintained only by developing the interior life, not simply through physical isolation.¹¹⁰ Occasionally several terms are used together to render the concept of *apatheia* as when Germanus asks how one can reach this state after having abandoned the cenobium, described as a sport center (*palaestra*) for virtue, too early. Here the terms *inperturbabilis*, *constantia*, *immobilis*, *firmitas* reinforce one another to bring out the notion.¹¹¹ This passage is especially interesting because of the clear understanding that *apatheia* is acquired through *askesis* (exercises).

107 *Conl.* 6.XI.12: *Et quia uidemur excessum quendam, dum genera temptationum uel ultionum percurrere uolumus, a proposita narratione fecisse, qua dicebamus uirum perfectum in utraque temptatione manere semper immobilem, ad eandem nunc iterum reuertamur.* See also *Conl.* 24.XXIV.7: *Quisquis autem in ueritate huic mundo renuntians super se tulerit iugum Christi et didicerit ab eo cotidianis iniuriarum exercitiis eruditus quia mitis est et humilis corde, in cunctis temptationibus manebit semper immobilis omniaque illi cooperabuntur ad bonum.*

108 *Conl.* 18.XIII.1 *Non enim esset laudabilis nec admiranda patientia, si nullis inimicorum iaculis inpetita tranquillitatis propositum retentaret, sed in eo est praeclara atque gloriosa, quod inruentibus in se temptationum procellis immobilis perseuerat.*

109 *Conl.* 19.IX.2: *tam iugem paene susceptionis inquietudinem immobili patientia tolerantes nihil aliud uel didicisse uel exercuisse omni uitae suae tempore crederentur.*

110 *Conl.* 18.XVI.1: *Duplex sane ad narrationem huius facti causa me compulsi, primum ut hanc immobilitatem uiri constantiamque pensantes, quanto minoribus inimici inpugnamur insidiis, tanto maiorem tranquillitatis atque patientiae sumamus affectum, deinde ut firma definitione teneamus a temptationum procellis inpugnationibusque diaboli tutos nos esse non posse, si omne praesidium patientiae nostrae omnemque fiduciam non in interioris hominis nostri uiribus, sed in cellulae claustris aut in solitudinis recessu sanctorumue consortio uel cuiusquam quae extra nos sit rei praesidio conlocemus.* See also *Conl.* 19.XIV.5: *Illud sane ad obtinendam iugem ac stabilem patientiam constanter atque immobiliter est tenendum, non licere nobis, quibus lege diuina non solum ultio iniuriarum, sed etiam memoria prohibetur. Cuiuslibet detrimenti uel irritationis obtentu ad iracundiam commoueri.*

111 *Conl.* 19.XI.1: *Quo ergo uel nobis uel ceteris qui eiusdem fragilitatis atque mensurae sunt remedio poterit subueniri, qui coenobialibus disciplinis tenuiter instituti ante expulsionem omnium uitiorum habitationem solitudinis coepimus adfectare, uel quo pacto inperturbatae mentis constantiam et immobilem patientiae poterimus adprehendere firmitatem, qui ipsas quodammodo scolas et exercitationis huius palaestram, in qua ad plenum erudiri ac perfici principia nostra debuerant, intempestiue intermissa coenobii congregatione dereliquimus?*

Cassian also uses *constantia* alone to bring out another aspect of *apatheia*. *Constantia mentis* is defined in one situation as *perseverantia*.¹¹² All temptations, whether of prosperity or of adversity help to develop this *constantia*.¹¹³ The attitude of the centurion of the gospel, interpreted allegorically, represents this *constantia*.¹¹⁴

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Although Cassian does not use the word *apatheia*, it is not clear that he deliberately avoided it, out of fear of Jerome's friends as has sometimes been suggested. It had rarely been used in Latin. And, contrary to the assertion of Guillaumont that *impassibilitas* was the corresponding Latin word for the concept, we have shown that this Latin term had rarely been used, with the notable exception of the translation of Evagrius's work *Ad Monachos*, to describe a human state.¹¹⁵ Contrary to Marsili's contention that it would have been easier to use *apatheia*

112 *Conl.* 4.IV.2: *Secunda uero probationis est causa, ut perseuerantia nostra uel mentis constantia et desiderium conprobetur, et qua intentione cordis uel orationum instantia deserentem nos uisitationem sancti spiritus requiramus, manifestetur in nobis, ac pariter agnoscentes, quanto labore amissum istud spiritale gaudium et puritatis laetitia conquiratur, sollicitius inuentam custodire ac tenere adtentius studeamus.*

113 *Conl.* 6.IX.3: *Omnia ergo quae prospera reputantur et dextrae dicuntur partis, quae sanctus apostolus gloriae et bonae famae uocabulo designauit, illa etiam quae existimantur aduersa, quae per ignobilitatem et infamiam euidenter expressit quaeque a sinistris esse describit, efficiuntur uiro perfecto arma iustitiae, si inlata sibi magnanimiter sustentauerit, quod uidelicet per haec dimicans et istis ipsis quibus inpugnari putatur aduersis tamquam armis utendo eisque uelut arcu et gladio scutoque ualidissimo contra illos qui haec ingerunt communis profectum suae patientiae ac uirtutis adquirat, gloriosissimum constantiae triumphum ex ipsis quae letaliter inferuntur capiens hostium telis, nec prosperis dumtaxat elatus nec deiectus aduersis, sed itinere plano ac uia regia semper incedens, ab illo tranquillitatis statu nequaquam laetitia superueniente quasi in dexteram motus nec ingruentibus aduersis tristitiaque dominante uelut ad laeuam rursus impulsus.*

114 *Conl.* 7.V.1: *Huius ergo perfectae mentis figura per illum euangelicum centurionem pulcherrime designatur, cuius uirtus atque constantia, qua non quibuslibet ingruentibus cogitationibus abducebatur, sed pro suo iudicio uel admittebat bonas uel contrarias absque ulla difficultate pellebat, hac tropica significatione descripta est : nam et ego homo sum sub potestate, habens sub me milites, et dico huic : uade, et uadit, et alio : ueni, et uenit, et seruo meo : fac hoc, et facit.*

115 ÉVAGRE LE PONTIQUE, *Traité pratique ou Le Moine 1*, ed. A. Guillaumont - C. Guillaumont (Sch 170), Paris 1971, 103, n.6: «Cassien, qui retient volontiers, par ailleurs, les termes grecs de la lanque technique d'Évagre, soit sous leur forme originale, soit en les traduisant littéralement en latin, ne l'emploie jamais, non plus que le correspondant latin *impassibilitas*, mais il recourt toujours à des expressions équivalentes, comme *puritas mentis, tranquillitas mentis*».

in order to avoid elaborate circumlocutions (giri di parole),¹¹⁶ we would suggest that Cassian used a variety of terms precisely in order to combat the misunderstandings of which he was undoubtedly well aware. It was not necessary to use the word in order to convey the concept. The terminology for doing this already existed in Latin. For this pedagogical purpose it was better to use a variety of phrases and for this he drew on the Latin tradition from Cicero to Ambrose.¹¹⁷ Ambrose had also written of the ideal of *apatheia* without ever using the word. It may be noted in passing that the same situation existed with regard to the word *askesis*, another Greek term that Cassian did not introduce into his discussions, although it was a key concept, if not indeed the key concept in the monastic vocabulary of the period. Nevertheless the terminology necessary to speak of it had existed in Latin for centuries in the philosophical vocabulary and Cassian made use of it.

Needless to say, Cassian does not equate *tranquillitas mentis/puritas cordis* with insensibility any more than did Seneca,¹¹⁸ although he uses the radical terminology of Seneca with regard to cutting out or eradicating the passions.¹¹⁹ Nor does he equate it with sinlessness (*inpeccantia*).¹²⁰ No human virtue is im-

116 S. MARSILI, *Giovanni Cassiano ed Evagrio Pontico. Dottrina sulla carità e contemplazione* (SA 6), Rome 1936, 115, n.1: «Ci si potrebbe forse chiedere come mai Cassiano, che pur fa uso abbastanza frequente di termini greci, abbia ommesso di servirsi proprio di uno che sarebbe stato tanto semplice ed evitava spesso grandi giri di parole».

117 This does not mean of course that Cassian (or for that matter, Evagrius) has exactly the same notion of *apatheia* as did Seneca or other Stoics. The notion has been qualified especially by making the path which leads to it pass through the Christian understanding of humility.

118 *Conl.* 1.XIV. 8.

119 See C. TIBILETTI, «Giovanni Cassiano. Formazione e dottrina», *Augustinianum* 17 (1977) 367-368.

120 The subject is dealt with in *Conl.* 11.IX, *Conl.* 22.XII.3 and at greater length in the twenty-third Conference, where Cassian uses the precise terminology (*anamarteton* and *inpeccantia*) employed by Jerome (see note 6 above). See especially *Conl.* 23.XIX.1: *Quisquis itaque anamarteton, id est inpeccantiam naturae adscribit humanae, non inanibus uerbis, sed conscientiae suae nobiscum testimonio ac probatione configit et tunc demum se absque peccato esse pronuntiet, cum se ab hoc summo bono senserit non auulsum: immo uero quisquis considerans conscientiam suam, ut non dicam amplius, unam saltem synaxin sine ulla uerbi uel facti uel cogitationis interpellatione se deprehenderit celebrasse, absque peccato se esse pronuntiet. Proinde quia his omnibus otiosis ac superfluis rebus uolucrum humanae mentis excursus fatemur carere non posse, per hoc utique consequenter sine peccato nos non esse ueraciter confitemur.* Cassian's use of the Greek term «anamarteton» here undoubtedly reflects Jerome's use of the same term and possibly that of Augustine as well, who in the meantime had adopted the term. See notes 4-6 above. On Cassian's treatment of the ques-

mutable; only God alone is immutable.¹²¹ Nor does he reject the distinction of the *eupatheiai* (although his terminology, due to the influence of the Scriptures, is not always consistent). It is not clear whether perfect *tranquillitas* can be achieved in this life, certainly it cannot without grace. But then grace is indispensable at every stage of the spiritual life. Neither Philo, nor Origen nor Evagrius would have disagreed with that. Purity of heart/*tranquillitas mentis* remains, however, an indispensable goal at which one must aim in order to make any progress at all in the spiritual life. These points and Cassian's answers to specific arguments in the critique of Augustine and Jerome, could of course be developed at greater length.

Here we have restricted the discussion to an examination of the Latin terminology for the concept of *apatheia*. A fuller examination of Cassian's response would involve a study of his theoretical treatment of *apatheia*/purity of heart using the terminology of *telos* and *scopos* in the first Conference as well as his use of the traditional Stoic portrait of the sage to illustrate the ideal. It is my hope to continue this study in the near future.¹²²

tion, see especially E. REBILLARD, «Quasi funambuli. Cassien et la controverse pélagienne sur la perfection», *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 40 (1994) 197-210, who stresses Cassian's agreement with Augustine on this point and notes his knowledge of the dossier of texts involved in the Pelagian controversy.

121 *Conl.* 6.XIV.2.

122 The essays «Job and Paul. Philosophy and Exegesis in Cassian's Sixth Conference» and «First Movements (*propatheiai*) in John Cassian» in this volume are a continuation of this study.

JOB AND PAUL. PHILOSOPHY AND EXEGESIS IN CASSIAN'S SIXTH CONFERENCE

Cassian's sixth conference can be read with profit, as he intended, apart from its full historical, literary and philosophical background, but his theological positions are better understood with reference to the texts to which he was reacting and with which he was in dialogue. As Umberto Eco has observed, «culture is a chain of texts which instruct other texts... the older ones leaving their traces on the newer».¹ In the case of Cassian the textual chain is particularly helpful; notwithstanding his insistence on the importance of experience, he was highly literate, and many texts inflected his thinking, including some philosophical, Scriptural and contemporary theological writings, especially some by Jerome and Augustine with which he disagreed. The difference between the views of Augustine and Cassian on the matter of grace and free will is well-known, and was already noted by their contemporary, Prospero of Aquitaine.² However, the divergence between Cassian and Augustine, particularly in the area of the theology of the spiritual life, extends well beyond the corrective offered in Conference 13.³

1 «...la cultura è una catena di testi che istruiscono altri testi, di concrezioni enciclopediche che si trasformano lentamente le une nelle altre, le vecchie lasciando le proprie tracce nelle nuove», U. ECO, *Semiotica e filosofia del linguaggio*, Torino 1984, 234.

2 See *De gratia Dei et libero arbitrio contra Collatorem*, PL 51, 213-276. For a useful summary of research on this topic, see D. O'KEEFE, «The *Via Media* of Monastic Theology. The Debate on Grace and Free Will in Fifth-Century Southern Gaul», *Downside Review* 112 (1994) 265-283; 113 (1995) 54-73; 157-174 and C. STEWART, *Cassian the Monk* (Oxford Studies in Historical Theology), Oxford 1998, 77-78. That ancient writers (or for that matter, modern ones) were acquainted with earlier works must sometimes be deduced from the «traces» left in their works, allusions, phrases, etc. Cassian never cites Augustine in Conference 13, but Prosper of Aquitaine had no difficulty in reading Conference 13 as a critique of Augustine's positions.

3 Cassian has too often been read exclusively as a transmitter of the earlier monastic tradition rather than as an author responding to the actual situation in southern Gaul. Such a study requires a close reading of Cassian in the context of other contemporary western texts. Recent examples of such study include: E. REBILLARD, «Quasi funambuli. Cassien et la controverse pélagienne sur la perfection», *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*

The present article is a sequel to an earlier article in which I attempted to describe the disagreement over *apatheia* as a typically western dispute, which developed at least partially in the context of the Pelagian controversy.⁴ However, Augustine's opposition to *apatheia*, which pre-dates the Pelagian controversy, was reinforced, in fact, by it.⁵ Both Augustine and Jerome had argued against the concept of *apatheia*, which they equated with both insensibility⁶ and a claim to sinlessness. Jerome had further charged that its proponents were aiming to be equal to God.⁷ Thus, from their standpoint the concept of *apatheia* represented an erroneous idea at best and heresy at worst. This rejection of *apatheia* repre-

40 (1994) 197-210, who stresses Cassian's agreement with Augustine on some points and notes his knowledge of the dossier of texts involved in the Pelagian controversy, and the unpublished work of my student S.G. SCANNERINI, *I Peccati dei Perfetti (Rm 7,19-25) nella Conl. 23 di Giovanni Cassiano* (Tesi di licenza in Teologia e Scienze Patristiche), Istituto Patristico Augustinianum, Roma 1998. The latter has shown (pp. 100-101) that Cassian, finding himself in the midst of the Pelagian controversy, was a receptive but critical reader of the other polemicists, and, while taking a position against Pelagianism, gave to the polemical exegesis of Jerome and Augustine a content inspired more by that of Origen, with whose work he was well acquainted.

- 4 M. SHERIDAN, «The Controversy over ἀπάθεια», in this volume, 335-363.
- 5 For an explanation of the development of Augustine's thought on the subject, the reader is referred to the previous essay (SHERIDAN, «The Controversy over ἀπάθεια», in this volume, 349-354). The texts of Augustine include: *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*, 60,3; *Civ.* 9,4 and 14,9.
- 6 The word «insensibility», derived from late Latin *insensibilitas*, is used here to indicate a lack of normal human emotion, the equivalent of the Greek word *anaesthesia*. The word used by Augustine is *stupor*. See *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*, 60,3: *istae sunt certe quatuor quas perturbationes uocant, timor et tristitia, amor et laetitia. habeant eas iustis de causis animi christiani, nec philosophorum stoicorum, uel quorumcumque similium consentiatur errori; qui profecto quemadmodum uanitatem existimant ueritatem, sic stuporem deputant sanitatem, ignorantes sic hominis animum, quemadmodum corporis membrum, desperatius aegrotare, quando et doloris amiserit sensum*. Jerome claimed that it meant becoming like a stone (see the following note). It lies outside the scope of the article to determine whether or not the claim of Jerome and Augustine corresponds to some historically identifiable Stoic position. A more thorough investigation of the differences between Augustine and Cassian would also require an examination of the ways in which they use the term *affectus*. The focus here is limited to the broad literary context against which Cassian expounds the concept of *apatheia* through the biblical figures of Job and Paul.
- 7 M. SHERIDAN, «The Controversy over ἀπάθεια», 347-349. Jerome directed his charge in Letter 133 particularly against Evagrius of Pontus, claiming that the term *apatheia* put the soul «in the position of being either a stone or God» (*uel saxum uel deum est*). He also charged that the followers of Pelagius (and implicitly all who strive for *apatheia*) were aiming to be equal to God (*dei sibi non dicam similitudinem sed aequalitatem*. *Epist.* 133,1).

sented for Cassian a major misunderstanding of the tradition stretching back to Philo about the development of the interior life, a tradition that combined key philosophical notions such as *askesis* and *apatheia* with biblical interpretation.⁸ The concept of *apatheia* was essential to Cassian's vision of the spiritual life. As the nexus connecting the two aspects of the spiritual life, the *bios praktikos* and the *bios theoretikos*, it could hardly be abandoned.⁹ Cassian never used the word *apatheia* (but neither did the earlier Latin philosophical tradition). It was not necessary to introduce the Greek term, because the terminology for it was already well established in Latin. However, he did seek to correct the misconceptions of Jerome and Augustine and to present the idea anew to a western audience by using the traditional terminology for the concept used by Cicero, Seneca and Ambrose together with the notion of purity of heart found in the New Testament and already associated with *apatheia* in the Greek tradition.¹⁰ Cassian had already dealt with this task previously. He devoted much of the first Conference to explaining this concept with the aid of the distinction between the Greek terms *scopos* (purity of heart/*tranquillitas mentis*/*apatheia*) and *telos* (the kingdom of God within you) of the spiritual life, using images such as the farmer, the merchant and the archer drawn from the tradition. In the fourteenth Conference he expounded again the distinction between the *bios praktikos* and the *bios theoretikos*, noting the essential connection between them. No progress can be made in the theoretical life unless one has first made progress in the practical life, that is, in the eradication of «the ingrown passions of body and soul» and the practice of the virtues (Conl. 14,2-3).¹¹ Thus, the quest for *apatheia* or «purity of heart» is integral to the development of the Christian life.

However, it is above all in the sixth Conference that he presents concretely the ideal of the person who strives for and achieves *apatheia*. The figures of Job, Paul, and the judge Aoth furnish the elements for drawing the portrait of

8 M. SHERIDAN, «Jacob and Israel. A Contribution to the History of an Interpretation», in this volume, 315-334.

9 For a discussion of the development of this terminology in relation to the spiritual life, see EVAGRE LE PONTIQUE, *Traité pratique*, ed. A. Guillaumont - C. Guillaumont (SCH 170), Paris 1971, 38-63.

10 For references, see SHERIDAN, «The Controversy over ἀπάθεια», 357-361. See now also: J. DRISCOLL, «Apatheia and Purity of Heart in Evagrius Ponticus», in *Purity of Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature. Essays in Honor of Juana Raasch*, ed. H.A. Luckman - L. Kulzer, Collegeville Minn. 1999, 141-159.

11 Conl. 14.III: *Vnde liquido patet difficilior conuelli atque eradicari inolititas corporis atque animae passiones quam spirituales extrui plantarique uirtutes.*

such a person. In effect, he uses the traditional Stoic image of the sage, coupled with an exposition of the traditional Stoic theme that the only true good is the moral one, virtue alone.¹² Since these aspects of Cassian's thought have not, to my knowledge, been previously noted, it may be worthwhile to analyse them in some detail.¹³

First, it is necessary to describe in greater detail the literary background against which Cassian is writing. Three points in that context are relevant to the subject matter of Conference 6: the Stoic doctrine of virtue alone as the true good, the interpretation of the figure of Paul, and the interpretation of Job in the previous tradition.

THE STOIC PRINCIPLE THAT THE ONLY TRUE GOOD IS THE MORAL ONE

The Stoic division of all things into the categories of the good, the bad and the indifferent along with the idea that virtue is the only true good had long since entered the Christian theological tradition. On the Latin side Cyprian had made use of the notion of the *adiaphora* (the indifferent) in his treatise *De mortalitate*.¹⁴ Ambrose, following Philo, had portrayed Jacob as a model of virtue unaffected by the *adiaphora*.¹⁵ Even Jerome had accurately and with apparent approval reported the Stoic teaching: «And hence the Stoics, who agree with our teachings in many respects, call nothing good except uprightness and virtue alone and nothing evil except vice».¹⁶

12 See M.L. COLISH, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages. 1. Stoicism in Classical Latin Literature* (Studies in the History of Christian Thought 34), Leiden 1985, 42-52; 126-132. For Seneca, see for example *De vita beata* 4,1-5, 7,1-4 et passim.

13 Gazaeus does not note that Cassian is here presenting traditional Stoic theory and even cites Augustine as a comment on Cassian in an effort to harmonize Cassian and Augustine (PL 49, 649-656). Pichery and Cristiani have nothing on the subject nor do Chadwick and Stewart treat the matter. The most recent commentator (Ramsey) does not mention the presence of Stoic themes nor relate the text to Jerome and Augustine. Colish gives a good summary of the various views about Cassian's concept of *apatheia* in general, agreeing with Olphe-Gaillard against Chadwick and Marsili but does not relate it to the disagreement with Jerome and Augustine (M.L. COLISH, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages. 2. Stoicism in Christian Latin Thought through the Sixth Century* (Studies in the History of Christian Thought 35), Leiden 1985, 119-120.

14 CYPRIAN, *De mortalitate* 14.225-229

15 AMBROSE, *Jac.* 1.7.29-30.

16 JEROME, *Comm. in Esaiam* 4.11.6-9, CCL 73, 151: *Unde et Stoici, qui nostro dogmati in plerisque concordant, nihil appellant bonum, nisi solam honestatem atque virtutem; nihil*

Although in his earlier writings Augustine had accepted the Stoic position that the *summum bonum* is virtue alone and this an end in itself, he later began to revise this position in such a way that the supreme good is seen to be God alone and that the virtues are only intermediary goods (*media bona sunt*). They are viewed as means to the possession of perfect wisdom and truth in God Himself.¹⁷ The *summum bonum* must be something greater than man's body or his soul. It must also be free from loss or change. Only the transcendent eternal God seen not only as object of contemplation but of love can meet these conditions. Augustine also redefines virtue as the perfect love of God while retaining the traditional division of the four cardinal virtues and the Stoic principle that the virtues are united by their common source. But true virtue requires the knowledge of God supplied by faith and the recognition that the acquisition of the supreme good does not lie entirely within our power.¹⁸

The rejection of the Stoic idea that the only true good is virtue provides the context for Augustine's rejection of the Stoic concept of *apatheia*. In Book 9 of *The City of God* he states: «But others, as the Stoics, are of the opinion that the wise man is not subject to these perturbations. But Cicero, in his book *De Finibus*, shows that the Stoics are here at variance with the Platonists and Peripatetics rather in words than in reality; for the Stoics decline to apply the term "goods" to external and bodily advantages, because they reckon that the only good is virtue, the art of living well, and this exists only in the mind».¹⁹ This passage serves as an introduction to his attack on the concept of *apatheia*, which is equated with insensibility.²⁰

malum, nisi turpitudinem. The translation is by Colish. For additional references, see COLISH, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* 2, 75-76.

17 For a detailed description of this transformation in Augustine's thought, see COLISH, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* 2, 213-220.

18 COLISH, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*. 2, 218.

19 *Civ.* 9,4,1: *Aliis autem, sicut Stoicis, cadere ullas omnino huiusce modi passiones in sapientem non placet. Hos autem, id est Stoicos, Cicero in libris De finibus bonorum e malorum uerbis magis quam rebus aduersus Platonicos seu Peripateticos certare conuincit; quando quidem Stoici nolunt bona appellare, sed commoda corporis et externa, eo quod nullum bonum uolunt esse hominis praeter uirtutem, tamquam artem bene uiuenti, quae non nisi in animo est.* The English translations of *The City of God* are by M. Dods: *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* 2, ed. P. Schaff, Edinburgh 1886.

20 The English word «insensibility» is used here, for want of a better term, to indicate a lack of the requisite human feelings or lack of emotions. The word used by Augustine is *stupor*. For a fuller description of Augustine's position, see SHERIDAN, «The Controversy over ἀπάθεια», 349-354.

For Augustine the notion that the only real good (or the *summum bonum* in his terminology) is virtue would be equivalent to saying that the *summum bonum* can be obtained in this life. His most developed assault on this notion is to be found later in Book 19 of *The City of God*, a text whose publication may have been too late to have influenced Cassian before writing the sixth Conference. Here Augustine unequivocally condemns the notion of finding the supreme good in this life:

But such is the stupid pride of these men [the Stoic philosophers] who fancy that the supreme good can be found in this life, and that they can become happy by their own resources, that their wise man, or at least the man whom they fancifully depict as such, is always happy, even though he become blind, deaf, dumb, mutilated, racked with pains, or suffer any conceivable calamity such as may compel him to make away with himself; and they are not ashamed to call the life that is beset with these evils happy. O happy life, which seeks the aid of death to end it? If it is happy, let the wise man remain in it; but if these ills drive him out of it, in what sense is it happy?²¹

For Augustine the virtues must be ordered to God²² or they become vices, for they give man the idea that he is autonomous:

It is for this reason that the virtues which it seems to itself to possess, and by which it restrains the body and the vices that it may obtain and keep what it desires, are rather vices than virtues so long as there is no reference to God in the matter. For although some suppose that virtues which have a reference only to themselves, and are desired only on their own account, are yet true and genuine virtues, the fact is that even then they are inflated with pride, and are therefore to be reckoned vices rather than virtues.²³

Thus in the mind of Augustine the Stoic notion of virtue alone as the true good of the soul, the concept of *apatheia*, the notion of sinlessness, and the absence of emotion are all connected together. They all fit together, in the sense that the rejection of one implies the rejection of all. The great enemy, which is also the major error of the Pelagians, is the illusion of human autonomy or the idea that man can achieve anything apart from explicit dependance on God.

21 *Civ.* 19,4.

22 On this theme see especially *Civ.* 19,13.

23 *Civ.* 19,25. For more extensive treatment of Augustine's shift, see COLISH, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* 2, 213-220.

THE FIGURE OF PAUL USED AGAINST APATHEIA

In his infamous Letter 133 to Ctesiphon, Jerome had already appealed to Paul, as well as to Virgil and Horace, to refute the notion of *apatheia*.²⁴ Augustine, in Book 14 of *The City of God*, probably under the influence of Jerome and of his identification of the idea with sinlessness, develops a portrait of Paul as a counter-sage.²⁵ Aware of the Stoic concept of the Sage as the embodiment of *apatheia*, Augustine in Book 9 had already contrasted the picture of the Stoic sage with the teaching of Christian doctrine derived from the Scriptures. There he had also asserted that it is the motivation, rather than the absence of the passions that counts. In Book 14 he expounds on an actively engaged Paul, not immune to the passions or emotions, terms that for Augustine, but not for all, were equivalents:

-that hero, I say, and athlete of Christ, instructed by Him, anointed of His Spirit, crucified with Him, glorious in Him, lawfully maintaining a great conflict on the theatre of this world, and being made a spectacle to angels and men (cf. 1 Cor 4:9), and pressing onwards for the prize of his high calling (cf. Phil 3:14; 2 Tim 4:7-8), -very joyfully do we with the eyes of faith behold him rejoicing with them that rejoice, and weeping with them that weep (cf. Rom 12:15); though hampered by fightings without and fears within (cf. 2 Cor 7:5); desiring to depart and to be with Christ (cf. Phil 1:23); longing to see the Romans, that he might have some fruit among them as among other Gentiles (cf. Rom 1:11-13) being jealous over the Corinthians, and fearing in that jealousy lest their minds should be corrupted from the chastity that is in Christ (cf. 2 Cor 11:2-3); having great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart for the Israelites (cf. Rom 9:2), because they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God (cf. Rom 10:3); and expressing not only his sorrow, but bitter lamentation over some who had formally sinned and had not repented of their uncleanness and fornications (cf. 2 Cor 12:21).

He concludes with words that anticipate the language of Book 19 already cited: «If these emotions and affections, arising as they do from the love of what is good and from a holy charity, are to be called vices, then let us allow these

24 JEROME, *Epist.* 133,1-2. He cites Rom 7:24, 7:23 and 7:19 to show that man cannot remain sinless, confusing of course *apatheia* with the idea of sinlessness.

25 In his earlier attack on the concept of *apatheia* in Book 9 of *The City of God*, Augustine had not used Paul as an argument against the idea.

emotions which are truly vices to pass under the name of virtues».²⁶ Thus for Augustine the positive example of a Paul, rejoicing and sorrowing to the full, provides conclusive proof from the Scriptures that the notion of *apatheia* is an error.

JOB

Evidently the Pelagians had used Job as an example of perfection achieved through the law and free will.²⁷ He was therefore a justification for their thesis of *impeccantia*, that is, that man can achieve a state in which he is immune to sin or cannot sin.²⁸ The response of Augustine was to argue that Job was not a just man according to the anthropocentric ideal of the Pelagians, but that he was just according to the theocentric ideal of the gospel. Job was justified by his acceptance of God's grace permitting him to confess his sins. He only is just who recognizes that he is a sinner. The verses Job 1:8 and 42:5-6 («I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes».) taken together prove that Job knows himself to be a sinner.²⁹

However, it is particularly in the context of arguing for the universality of original sin that Job is cited. Job 14:4-5 («No one is clean in your sight, not even the infant whose life is but one day on the earth».) is cited forty-six times in the works of Augustine; all but four of these after the year 411 when Augustine's

26 *Civ.* 14,9,2. *illum, inquam, uirum, athletam christi, doctum ab illo, unctum de illo, crucifixum cum illo, gloriosum in illo, in theatro huius mundi, cui spectaculum factus est et angelis et hominibus, legitime magnum agonem certantem et palmam supernae uocationis in anteriora sectantem, oculis fidei libentissime spectant gaudere cum gaudentibus, flere cum flentibus, foris habentem pugnas, intus timores, cupientem dissolui et esse cum christo, desiderantem uidere romanos, ut aliquem fructum habeat et in illis, sicut et in ceteris gentibus, aemulantem corinthios et ipsa aemulatione metuentem, ne seducantur eorum mentes a castitate, quae in christo est, magnam tristitiam et continuum dolorem cordis de israelitis habentem, quod ignorantes dei iustitiam et suam uolentes constituere iustitiae dei non essent subiecti; nec solum dolorem, uerum etiam luctum suum denuntiantem quibusdam, qui ante peccauerunt et non egerunt paenitentiam super inmunditia et fornicationibus suis. hi motus, hi affectus de amore boni et de sancta caritate uenientes si uitia uocanda sunt, sinamus, ut ea, quae uere uitia sunt, uirtutes uocentur.*

27 A.-M. LA BONNARDIÈRE, *Biblia Augustiniana. A.T. 2. Livres Historiques*, Paris 1960, 120; 109-172 (Job).

28 On the origin of this term, which Jerome seems to have invented, see M. SHERIDAN, «The Controversy over ἀπάθεια», 336-337.

29 LA BONNARDIÈRE, *Biblia Augustiniana. A.T. 2. Livres Historiques*, 120.

attention was directed to the use that the Pelagians were making of the book of Job.³⁰ In using the text to refute the idea of *inpeccantia* or to insist on the notion of original sin, Augustine was no innovator. Origen had used the same verses to argue for the necessity of infant baptism.³¹ Cyprian, Ambrose and Jerome had likewise cited it.³² It is also cited in the third rule of Tyconius.

All except the Pelagians agreed that this text demonstrated the universality of sin. Job would thus be an important figure in distinguishing *apatheia* from the concept of *inpeccantia*. The figure of Job was in fact ideally suited for creating a portrait of the Christian sage who had achieved *apatheia* but was not sinless.³³

To summarize what has been said on these three points, the heritage of Jerome and Augustine, from Cassian's point of view, confused several different ideas. What was needed was a positive presentation of *apatheia*, clearly distinguished from insensibility, from the notion of sinlessness, and from the allegation that it represented a claim to be equal to God or to be autonomous. In this literary context the sixth Conference takes on added meaning, not as the teaching of an isolated monk in the Egyptian desert but as a careful, prepared corrective to doctrines propagated in the Latin world that Cassian regarded as mistaken.

30 The text cited corresponds to the Vetus Latina (*Nemo mundus in conspectu tuo, nec infans cuius est unius diei uita super terram.*) rather than to the Vulgate. For the complete list, see LA BONNARDIÈRE, *Biblia Augustiniana. A.T. II. Livres Historiques*, 143-145.

31 *HomLev* 8,3; *HomNum* 3,2; *HomIs* 3,2; *ComRm* 5,1.5.9.

32 CYPRIAN, *Testimonia* 3,54; AMBROSE, *De Bono Mortis* 11,49; JEROME, *In Jonam* 3, *Adv. Iov.* 2.

33 On the history of the interpretation of Job, see M.-L. GUILLAUMIN, «Recherches sur l'exégèse patristique de Job», in *Studia Patristica* (TU 115), Berlin 1975, 304-308; C. KANNENGIESSER, «Job chez les Pères», in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 8, Paris 1974, 1218-1225; W. GEERLINGS, «Hiob und Paulus. Theodizee und Paulinismus in der lateinischen Theologie am Ausgang des 4. Jahrhunderts», *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 24 (1981) 56-66; *Le Livre de Job chez les Pères*, ed. J. Doignon (Cahiers de Biblia Patristica 5), Strasbourg 1996. Origen had interpreted Job as an example of patience and magnanimity: *HomGen* 8, 10: *Sed quia bene pertulit agonas patientiae et in omnibus, quae passus est, magnanimus fuit et dixit: «Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit; ut Domino placuit, ita factum est, sit nomen Domini benedictum»*, *vide ad ultimum, quid de eo scribitur: «recepit» inquit «omnia dupla, quae amiserat»*. Gregory of Nyssa in his *Life of Macrina* (17) used Job as an example of one who, like Macrina, despite physical sufferings did not interrupt his activity but maintained the control of his reason and managed to continue to contemplate the highest realities. See also note 65 below for Basil's use of Job.

THE SIXTH CONFERENCE

The subject of the sixth conference is ostensibly the question of the death of some holy persons, or why God permits the good to suffer evil. It is introduced by the mention of an incident in Palestine in which some monks were killed by Saracen bandits. In response to the question why God permits such things, the speaker Theodore suggests that the question shows ignorance and leads to blasphemy. One must learn to distinguish between what is really good and what is really evil. The insistence in the text on the notion of ignorance and the need for a true understanding of Scripture already indicates the strong influence of the Stoic tradition.³⁴ The need for «a true understanding of Scripture» (*veram scripturarum definitionem*) is of course Cassian's own addition, a point which he makes many times, and which reflects the Alexandrian tradition of interpretation.³⁵

Theodore then introduces the real subject of the conference, the distinction between the good, the evil, and the indifferent and the classical Stoic position that virtue alone is the real (or principal) good of the soul.³⁶ Cassian does not use the expression *summum bonum*, as had Augustine, and is careful to place the principle at once in the context of faith «so that our faith, strengthened by real knowledge (*fides uera scientia communita*), might remain undamaged».³⁷

34 On the «ethical intellectualism» of the Greek philosophic tradition in general and the Stoic in particular, one may usefully consult G. REALE, *Storia della filosofia antica* 3, Milano 1992, 404-408; G. REALE, *Storia della filosofia antica* 5, Milano 1992, 144-145.

35 See for example, *Inst.* 8.3-5 on the correct interpretation of the passages referring to the anger of God, and for the theory of interpretation in general, *Conference* 14.

36 The specific terminology used by Cassian (*bonum, malum, medium*) suggests a possible dependence on the Latin translation by Rufinus of Origen, *PArch* 3,1,18: *Quodsi dixerint quia medium est velle bona et currere ad bona, id est neque bonum neque malum, dicemus ad eos: Si medium est velle bona et currere ad bona, ergo et id, quod his contrarium est, medium erit, id est velle mala et currere ad mala; sed certum est quia non sit medium velle mala et currere ad mala, sed aperte malum est: constat ergo quia non est medium velle bona et currere ad bona, sed bonum.* The word *medium* in the singular is not generally found in this context but the plural does occur together with the more common term *indifferentia* to render the Greek ἀδιάφορα. See SENECA, *Ep.* 82,14,2; AMBROSE, *Epistulae*, lib. 2,7,20.

37 This phrase is worthy of note as revealing both a different attitude toward the philosophical tradition and a different methodological approach than Augustine's. The polemic against the philosophers (especially the Stoics) found in Augustine and Jerome is entirely missing in Cassian. Indeed, he even uses the phrase «philosophia christiana» (*Conl.* 4.1) in the sense in which the term *bios philosophikos* was used in the Greek tradition. In terms of methodology Augustine had begun with a description of Stoic teaching and then asked whether this corresponds to the teaching of Scripture. Cassian uses a different approach

Likewise, the principle that «nothing should be believed to be the chief good other than the virtue of the soul alone» (*uirtus animi sola*) is conditioned by the assertion that virtue «leads us by a sincere faith to divine realities and makes us cling unceasingly to the unchangeable (*inmutabilis*) good».³⁸ In the same way, he asserts that only sin is really evil, for it separates us from God and joins us to the devil. Thus the pure Stoic doctrine is conditioned by being placed in a theological context which removes the possibility of the charge of independence from God. In particular the introduction of the word *inmutabilis* to qualify the good (God) is significant in view of the later discussion that only God is truly immutable and against the Pelagian affirmation that one could achieve a state in which it is not possible to sin, the teaching condemned by Jerome and equated with *apatheia*.³⁹

There follows an extensive discussion of what falls in the category of the *media* and of the fact that the *media* are to be considered useful (*utilia*) even when they seem to be negative or injurious, including sickness and death.⁴⁰ A citation from Paul supports this view: «Therefore I am happy in sickness, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distress, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong, for power is made perfect in weakness». (2 Cor 12:10,9). This section (chap.3) concludes with a restatement of the principle that the chief good (*principale bonum*) is not to be found in the *media* but in virtue alone.

The next section deals with the question of whether or not God has ever permitted evil to be done to his holy ones either directly or indirectly. It begins with a premise that deserves careful attention:

Maintaining these distinctions as fixed and unchanging, therefore, and knowing that nothing is good other than virtue alone, which comes from the fear and love of God, and that the bad is nothing other than sin alone and separation from

with the phrase *fides uera scientia communita*. The latter (*uera scientia*) represents philosophical knowledge that can be used to deepen faith.

38 *Conl.* 6.3.1: *Nihil igitur in rebus dumtaxat humanis principale bonum esse credendum est nisi uirtus animi sola, quae fide sincera nos ad diuina perducens illi inmutabili bono facit iugiter inhaerere*. The quotations from the sixth Conference in English are from the translation by Boniface Ramsey: JOHN CASSIAN, *The Conferences*, tr. B. Ramsey, (ACW 57), New York 1997.

39 *Epist.* 133,3.

40 The use of the term *utilia* reflects Cassian's knowledge of the tradition. For the use of the term by Cicero, see COLISH, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, 2, 145-158 and for its use by Ambrose (following Cicero) see COLISH, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* 2, 66-70.

God, let us now discuss whether God has ever permitted evil to be brought upon his holy ones, either by himself or by someone else.⁴¹

The «distinctions» in question are of course the good, the bad, and the indifferent. They must be maintained unchanging (*immobiles*) in the mind in order for the person himself to remain *immobilis* in the face of the things that are indifferent (*media*), whether the latter appear favorable or unfavorable. The restatement of the principle that the only real good is virtue alone is again accompanied by a qualification, namely, that virtue comes from fear of God and love.⁴² However, in the light of the objections raised against the Stoic principle by Jerome and Augustine, the «fear of the Lord» reference defend's the principle against the charge that man can achieve virtue on his own independently of God, while at the same time insisting on its validity. The section concludes with the introduction of Job as a prime witness to the validity of the principle. The devil was «unable to taint him with sin because he remained unyielding through it all and did not give way to blasphemy».⁴³ The phrase «he remained unyielding» translates *immobilis perseverans*, a precise Latin description of *apatheia*.⁴⁴ Job is *immobilis* because he has in his mind the unchanging distinctions (*immobiles*) of the good, the bad, and the indifferent and therefore does not blaspheme by attributing to God evil, for he has suffered only things that are indifferent and not the only real evil, separation from God. Thus knowledge helps to maintain virtue.⁴⁵

There follows in chapters 5-6 an extended discussion of how to understand those scriptural passages that seem to speak of God as creating or inflicting evils. The speaker Theodore explains that God makes use of human words and senti-

41 *Conl.* 6.IV.1: *Has itaque diuisiones fixas atque immobiles retinentes scientesque nihil esse bonum nisi uirtutem solam, quae ex timore dei ac dilectione descendit, nec malum quicquam esse nisi peccatum solum et separationem a deo diligenter nunc discutiamus, utrum deus umquam sanctis suis aut per se aut per alium quempiam inferri permiserit malum.*

42 Cassian had already introduced «fear of the Lord» in the spiritual program set forth by Abba Pinufius at the end of the fourth book of the Institutes where fear of the Lord is said to be the beginning of wisdom (citing Prov 9:10) *Inst.* 4.XXXV, XXXIX.

43 *Conl.* 6.IV.2: *nequaquam ei peccati maculam quiuit infligere, quia in cunctis immobilis perseverans nullum blasphemiae adcommodaui adsensum.*

44 See SHERIDAN, «The Controversy over ἀπάθεια», in this volume, 358-360.

45 Knowing how to interpret adversity was a traditional Stoic theme. See for example SENECA, *Dial.* 9 (*De tranquillitate animi*, 14,2). The sage knows how to interpret adversity positively. See also PHILO, *Cher.* 29, for the theme of not giving in either to adversity or prosperity.

ments for communicating with human beings. This section in effect takes up the «true understanding of Scripture» (*ueram scripturarum definitionem*) promised earlier in chap. 2.4.

The lengthy passage that follows (chaps. 7-12) forms the heart of the conference. It is introduced by Germanus' question about how a murderer can be called a criminal, if he has performed a service for the one killed and by the response of Theodore that one must distinguish between the objective nature of the good, the bad, and the indifferent and the intentions of those performing such deeds. This brings us back to the example of Job and a restatement of the principle: «we should hold firmly (*inmobilititer*) to this understanding - that no one can bring evil upon another person if he has not already brought it upon himself due to the slothfulness and weakness of his heart» (*Conl.* 6.IX.1). To support this principle Cassian then invokes Paul, citing Rom 8:28 «We know that for those who love God everything works together for the good». This, he explains, must include all the things considered fortunate as well as all those thought to be unfortunate, that is, all the indifferent things. This leads to another citation of Paul: «“By the arms of righteousness on the right hand and on the left”—that is, “by glory and dishonor, by bad reputation and good reputation, as deceivers and truthful, as sad yet always rejoicing, as needy yet as enriching many”» (2 Cor 6:7-10). This quotation serves to introduce two images, that of «the left and the right» and that of «arms,» both of which Cassian will develop. The left and the right represent the things considered to be unfortunate and fortunate. Both become the arms of righteousness (*arma iustitiae*) «for the perfect man if he sustains in great-hearted fashion (*magnanimiter*) whatever befalls him». Here the adverb *magnanimiter* is in contrast with *pusillanimitate* used earlier in the chapter in the statement of the principle that no one can bring real evil upon another unless he allows it through sloth and weakness of heart.⁴⁶ Such a man, says Cassian,

will gain ground in patience and virtue, triumphing gloriously in the very face of the enemies' lethal spears, neither elated by prosperity nor dejected by adversity but always proceeding along on an even course and on the royal road, never moved away from that state of calm at the appearance of joy, as it were toward

46 It may be of interest to note that the word *magnanimus* is used of Job also in Rufinus' translation of Origen, *HomGn* 8,10: *Sed quia bene pertulit agonas patientiae et in omnibus, quae passus est, magnanimus fuit et dixit: «Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit; ut Domino placuit, ita factum est, sit nomen Domini benedictum»*, vide ad ultimum, quid de eo scribitur: «recepit» inquit «omnia dupla, quae amiserat».

the right, nor as it were pushed to the left by an onrush of adversity or when sadness predominates. For «there is much peace for those who love your name, and for them there is no stumbling block». (Ps 119:165)⁴⁷

The phrase «neither elated by prosperity nor dejected by adversity» cannot help but recall also another famous portrait from the monastic literary tradition, that of Antony by Athanasius, who describes his hero in chap. 14 as being in perfect equilibrium, governed by reason.⁴⁸

THE ROYAL ROAD

Here Cassian has introduced an image already used several times in earlier in his writings, that of the royal road (*uia regia*).⁴⁹ The image of the royal road comes from Num 21:22 but there one finds no mention of left or right but rather of fields and vineyards. Cassian uses the image, however, because of its association with right and left.

The image of the royal road was fairly common in Christian literature. Philo had already interpreted it to mean true philosophy or the philosophic life, for it is the road of *askesis* and meditation on that which is morally beautiful. It is the road that leads to God and Philo also identifies it with the word of God, using the text of Deut 28:14 «do not turn aside from the word which I command you this

⁴⁷ *Conl.* 6.IX.3. *Omnia ergo quae prospera reputantur et dextrae dicuntur partis, quae sanctus apostolus gloriae et bonae famae uocabulo designauit, illa etiam quae existimantur aduersa, quae per ignobilitatem et infamiam euidenter expressit quaeque a sinistris esse describit, efficiuntur uiro perfecto arma iustitiae, si inflata sibi magnanimiter sustentauerit, quod uidelicet per haec dimicans et istis ipsis quibus impugnari putatur aduersis tamquam armis utendo eisue uelut arcu et gladio scutoque ualidissimo contra illos qui haec ingerunt communitus profectum suae patientiae ac uirtutis adquirat, gloriosissimum constantiae triumphum ex ipsis quae letaliter inferuntur capiens hostium telis, nec prosperis dumtaxat elatus nec deiectus aduersis, sed itinere plano ac uia regia semper incedens, ab illo tranquillitatis statu nequaquam laetitia superueniente quasi in dexteram motus nec ingruentibus aduersis tristitiaque dominante uelut ad laeuam rursus impulsus. Pax enim multa diligentibus nomen tuum : et non est illis scandalum .*

⁴⁸ «The state of his soul was one of purity, for it was not constricted by grief, nor relaxed by pleasure, nor affected by either laughter or dejection. Moreover when he saw the crowd, he was not annoyed any more than he was elated at being embraced by so many people. He maintained utter equilibrium, like one guided by reason and steadfast in that which accords with nature». *Vit. Ant.* 14. English translation: ATHANASIUS, *The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, tr. R.C. Gregg (Classics of Western Spirituality), New York 1980, 42.

⁴⁹ It is used in *Inst.* 11.IV and *Conl.* 2.II.

day, to the right or to the left». It is the road of virtue.⁵⁰ Origen had interpreted the phrase to refer to Jesus as the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6) using the principle of the interpretation of the Scriptures by means of the Scriptures⁵¹ and the word «way» (ὁδός) as the link.⁵² Missing in Origen, however, is any explicit reference to «right» and «left». It has been suggested that the source for Cassian's use of the phrase is Letter 16 of Evagrius Ponticus in which he speaks of the the demons that watch to see if a monk inclines either to the right or to the left or whether he walks in the middle of the royal road.⁵³ It has not been noted, however, that Jerome used the phrase many times and often in the context of speaking about virtue.⁵⁴ Particularly interesting is his use of the phrase in the *Commentary on Isaiah* where it is equated with *fortitudo et constantia*.⁵⁵ *Constan-*

50 PHILO, *Post.* 101-102: Μωυσῆς δὲ οὐτ' εἰς δεξιὰ οὐτ' εἰς ἀριστερὰ οὐδ' ὁλῶς εἰς μέρη τοῦ γῆνιου Ἐδὼμ ἀποκλίνειν οἶεται δεῖν, τῇ δὲ μέσῃ ὁδῷ παρέρχεσθαι, ἣν κυριώτατα καλεῖ βασιλικήν (Num. 20, 17). ἐπειδὴ γάρ πρῶτος καὶ μόνος τῶν ὅλων βασιλεὺς ὁ θεός ἐστι, καὶ ἡ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἄγουσα ὁδὸς ἅτε βασιλέως οὕσα εἰκότως ὠνόμασται βασιλική. ταύτην δ' ἡγοῦ φιλοσοφίαν, οὐχ ἦν μέτεισιν ὁ νῦν ἀνθρώπων σοφιστικὸς ὁμιλος—λόγων γάρ οὗτοι τέχνας μελετήσαντες κατὰ τῆς ἀληθείας τὴν πανουργίαν σοφίαν ἐκάλεσαν ἔργῳ μοχθηρῷ θεῖον ἐπιφημίσαντες ὄνομα—, ἀλλ' ἦν ὁ ἀρχαῖος ἀσκητῶν θίασος διήθλει, τὰς τιθασοὺς τῆς ἡδονῆς γοητείας ἀποστρεφόμενος, ἀστείως καὶ αὐστηρῶς χρώμενος τῇ τοῦ καλοῦ μελέτῃ. τὴν βασιλικὴν γοῦν ταύτην ὁδόν, ἣν ἀληθῆ καὶ γνήσιον ἔφαμεν εἶναι φιλοσοφίαν, ὁ νόμος καλεῖ θεοῦ ῥῆμα καὶ λόγον. γέγραπται γάρ· „οὐκ ἐκκλινεῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ ῥήματος οὐ ἐγὼ ἐντέλλομαι σοι σήμερον δεξιὰ οὐδὲ ἀριστερά“ (Deut. 28, 14)· ὥστε ἐμφανῶς ἐπιδεδείχθαι ὅτι ταῦτόν ἐστι τῇ βασιλικῇ ὁδῷ τὸ θεοῦ ῥῆμα, εἴγε προτρέπει μὴτ' ἀπὸ τῆς βασιλικῆς ὁδοῦ μὴτ' ἀπὸ τοῦ ῥήματος, ὡς συνωνύμων ὄντων, ἀποκλίνοντας ὀρθῇ διανοίᾳ τὴν ἐπ' εὐθείας ἄγουσαν ἀτραπὸν μέσῃν τε καὶ λεωφόρον βαδίζειν. On the interpretation of this passage, see FILONE DI ALESSANDRIA, *Le origini del male*, ed. R. Radice (I classici del pensiero), Milano 1984, 347-348.

51 For this principle, used frequently by Cassian, see ORIGEN, *HomGn* 2,6; *PArch* 4,3,5.

52 ORIGEN, *HomNum* 12,4. See also *ComJn* 6,19.

53 Letter 16, in W. FRANKENBERG, *Evagrius Ponticus*, (Abhandlung der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, Neue Folge, Band xiii, no. 2), Berlin 1912, 577. See S. MARSILI, *Giovanni Cassiano ed Evagrio Pontico. Dottrina sulla carità e contemplazione*, Rome 1936, 94. See also H.O. WEBER, *Die Stellung des Johannes Cassianus zur ausserpachomianischen Mönchstradition. Eine Quellenuntersuchung*, Münster 1961, 43, who accepts Marsili's suggestion that Cassian's source is this passage from Evagrius.

54 It is in fact found 12 times in Jerome's writings, 6 of which occur in the *Commentary on Isaiah*: *Comm. in Esaiam* 9,30,21; 16,57,10 (5x); *Comm. in Ezech.* 11,38; 12, 40; *In Amos* 12,5; *Adv. Iov.* 1,14; *Dial. contra Pelag.* prol.,2; *Epist.* 49,8 (referring to his use of it in *Adv. Iov.*).

55 *Comm. in Esaiam* 16,57,10: *liberalitas quoque et dispensatio uirtus maxima est, a qua declinat ad dexteram, qui parvus est, et non solum aliis, sed ne sibi quidem tribuit quod necesse est. ad sinistram, qui comedit substantiam suam cum meretricibus, et dicit cum israel:*

tia was in fact one of the terms used in the Latin literary tradition to describe *apatheia*.⁵⁶ Cassian used both these terms in this passage of the sixth Conference, in effect, pitting Jerome against Jerome. Cassian's phrase *gloriosissimum constantiae triumphum* is a description of *apatheia*. A little later in chap. 10,6 Cassian returns to the description of Job and says of him: «he retained his strength of soul uncorrupted» (*incompactam animi fortitudinem retentabat*). Thus, to continue on the royal road becomes equivalent to maintaining *apatheia* in the face of either prosperity or misfortune.

Cassian had in fact already made use of the phrase *uia regia* in Institutes 11 and Conference 2 and would use it again in Conference 24. The context in which it is used in Institutes 11 is very similar to that of Conference 6 and the phrase is cited in conjunction with 2 Cor 6:7-8 («by means of “the arms of righteousness on the right hand and on the left” must, in accordance with the Apostle's teaching, pass “through glory and dishonor, through bad reputation and good reputation”») ⁵⁷ as it is in Conference 6. Here, by means of the principle of interpreting the Scriptures by means of the Scriptures and using the words «right» and «left» as the connectors, Cassian also introduces Prov 4:27 (LXX): «Turn not aside to the right hand nor to the left». The right and the left in this case represent the dangers of becoming inflated with one's own virtues and spiritual progress (the right) or of seeking one's own glory (the left). In Conference 2.II, we find a similar context in a discussion of the virtue of discretion: «which avoids excess of any kind and teaches the monk always to proceed along the royal road and does not let him be inflated by virtues on the right hand - that is, in an excess of fervor to exceed the measure of a justifiable moderation by a foolish presumption - nor let him wander off to the vices on the left hand because of a weakness for pleasure ...».⁵⁸ In Conference 24 Cassian resumes his

manducemus et bibamus; cras enim moriemur. fortitudo etiam atque constantia uia regia est, a qua declinat ad dexteram, qui temerarius et pertinax est; ad sinistram, qui formidolosus et pauidus. unde uir sanctus per uiam rectam gradi cupiens deprecatur: deduc me, domine, in uia recta. (CCL 73A). Jerome composed this work in the years 408-410. For the dating as well as a description of the character of this voluminous work, see J.N.D. Kelly, *Jerome. His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, New York 1975, 299-302.

56 See M. SHERIDAN, «The Controversy over ἀπάθεια», *passim*.

57 *Inst.* 11.IV.

58 *Conl.* 2.II.4: *Nec enim alia lapsus eorum causa deprehenditur, nisi quod minus a senioribus instituti nequaquam potuerunt rationem discretionis adipisci, quae praetermittens utramque nimietatem uia regia monachum docet semper incedere et nec dextra uirtutum permittit extolli, id est feruoris excessu iustae continentiae modum inepta praesumptione transcendere, nec oblectatum remissione deflectere ad uitia sinistra concedit, hoc est sub praetextu guber-*

point from Conference six; it is we «who make rough the straight and smooth paths of the Lord with the wicked and hard rocks of our desires, who very foolishly abandon the royal road paved with apostolic and prophetic stones and made level by the footsteps of all the holy ones and of the Lord himself ...». This road leads to the heavenly Jerusalem and, once again citing Paul as he did in beginning Conference Six, Cassian continues that those who follow it, taking up the yoke of Christ «will always remain unmoved (*manebit semper immobilis*) in every trial, and “everything will work together for the good” for him» (Rom 8:28).⁵⁹ The «apostolic and prophetic stones» and the «footsteps» may well refer to the depiction of Paul and Job in Conference 6.

Another passage from Conference 24 is worthy of note because of the similarities with the teaching of Conference 6. In the following chapter (25) the speaker Abraham continues:

In the struggle with trials then, the kindly grace of the Savior in our regard brings greater rewards of praise than if he had removed from us all the strictures of combat. For it is more nobly and eminently virtuous to remain constantly unmoved (*manere semper immobilem*) when surrounded by persecution and affliction, to cling confidently and courageously to the protection of God, to triumph gloriously over impatience with the weapons of invincible virtue, so to speak, when humanly attacked, and in some way to acquire strength from weakness, because «strength is perfected in weakness» (2 Cor 12:9). «For, behold,» says the Lord, «I have made you into an iron pillar and a brass wall over all the land, to the kings of Judah and to its princes and priests and to all the people of the land. And they will fight against you and they shall not prevail. because I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord» (Jer 1:18-19). According to the unadulterated teaching of the Lord, then, the royal road is easy and smooth, although it may be felt as harsh and rough.⁶⁰

nandi corporis contrario spiritus tepore lentescere. See M. DJUTH, «Cassian's use of the figure *Uia Regia* in *Collatio* II “On Discretion”», in *Studia Patristica* 30, Leuven 1997, 167-175. Djuth does not note that Cassian uses the phrase elsewhere than in Conference 2 and does not advert to Jerome's use of it before Cassian. For a more extensive treatment of the theme of the «royal road» in antiquity, see F. TAILLIEZ, «BASILIKE ODOS. Les valeurs d'un terme mystique et le prix de son histoire littéraire», *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 13 (1947) 299-354. I am indebted to A.M.C. Casiday for this reference.

59 *Conl.* 24.XXIV.5-7.

60 *Conl.* 24.XXV.1 *Maiora igitur nobis per conluctationem temptationum laudis contulit praemia benigna erga nos gratia saluatoris, quam si omnem a nobis necessitatem certaminis abstulisset. Etenim sublimioris praestantiorisque uirtutis est persecutionibus aerumnisque uallatum manere semper immobilem et ad praesidia dei fidum atque intrepidum perdurare,*

Several observations are relevant regarding this passage. Cassian is careful to insert the «grace of the Savior» to avoid any idea that one achieves such victory by one's own strength. Secondly, the citation from 2 Cor 12:9 implicitly invokes the example of Paul. Thirdly, the image of the iron pillar and the brass wall quoted from Jeremiah has a function similar to the image of the seal of adamant in the sixth Conference.⁶¹ The whole passage is a description of the significance of remaining on the royal road: remaining *semper inmobilem* in the face of the assaults of passion, in other words, it is *apatheia*.

To return now to Conference 6.IX, one may note that the state described by the phrase *uia regia* in Conference 24 is the same state described by the use of the term in the sixth Conference «on the royal road never moved away from that state of calm (*ab illo tranquillitatis statu*) at the appearance of joy, as it were toward the right, nor as it were pushed to the left by an onrush of adversity or when sadness predominates». The «state of tranquillity» like the phrase *semper inmobilem* is a description of *apatheia*. In the following paragraph, by way of inclusion, Cassian again cites Rom 8:28: «For those who love God everthing works together for the good,» setting it against Prov 14:7 (LXX): «Everything is against a foolish man». This opposition also corresponds to the traditional Stoic contrast of the sage and the fool.

THE AMBIDEXTROUS MAN

To reinforce the image that Cassian has constructed of the wise man who perseveres on the royal road of tranquility, able to use both positive and negative situations to his advantage, he introduces a new figure in chapter 10, that of the judge Aoth. Aoth can be introduced by the use of the principle of interpreting the Scriptures by means of the Scriptures, using the terms «right» and «left»

humanisque incursibus uelut armis inuictae uirtutis accinctum gloriosissime de inpatientia triumphare et adquirere quodammodo de infirmitate uirtutem, quia uirtus in infirmitate perficitur. 2. Ecce enim dedi te, inquit dominus, in columnam ferream, et in murum aereum, super omnem terram, regibus Iuda, et principibus, et sacerdotibus eius, et omni populo terrae. Et bellabunt aduersum te, et non praeualebunt : quia ego tecum sum, ut eruam te, ait dominus. Ergo secundum meram domini traditionem uia regia suauis ac leuis est, licet dura et aspera sentiatur.

61 Cassian uses the same quotation from Jer 1:18-19 in *Conl.* 18.XIII.4 as well as an allusion to Paul (2 Cor 12:9) in a discussion of patience, where *tranquillitas* and *inmobilis* again characterize *apatheia*: *Non enim esset laudabilis nec admiranda patientia, si nullis inimicorum iaculis inpetita tranquillitatis propositum retentaret, sed in eo est praeclara atque gloriosa, quod inruentibus in se temptationum procellis immobilis perseuerat* (*Conl.* 18.XIII.1).

as the connecting words. Aoth is described in the Book of Judges as ambidextrous: «who used either hand as if it were his right hand» (Judg 3:15).⁶²

We shall also be able to possess this quality in a spiritual way if by a good and correct use we put the things which are considered fortunate and right-handed and the things which are called unfortunate and left-handed on the right side, so that whatever befalls may become for us, in the words of the Apostle, «the arms of righteousness». For we see that our inner man consists in two parts or, as I might say, two hands. No holy person can be without what we call the left hand, but perfect virtue is discerned in the fact that by proper use he turns both into a right hand.⁶³

There follows a description of the emotional state of the ambidextrous man when faced with experiences that come from both the right and the left. His right hand represents his spiritual achievements. He is described as «fervent in spirit». With an ecstatic mind, he «ardently desires future realities» and

62 Cassian cites the Greek term with a Latin equivalent: «ἀμφοτεροδέξιοι, *id est ambidextri, nuncupantur*». The word *ambidexter* is not found in the Vulgate and the Greek word occurs only twice in the Septuagint: Judg 3:15 and 20:16. The word appears to have been introduced into Latin by Jerome in his translation of Origen's homilies on the Psalms, which could be the source for Cassian's use of it, even though the explanation given there is different from that proposed by Cassian. For the text of Jerome's translation (ἀμφοτεροδέξιος *scribitur, id est, utramque manum dexteram habens, quem nos latine ambidextrum possumus dicere*), see: *S. Hieronymi presbyteri Opera. Pars II. Opera homiletica. Tractatus siue homiliae in Psalmos*, ed. G. Morin (CCL 78), Turnhout 1958, 378. For the attribution of these homilies to Origen, see V. PERI, *Omellie origeniane sui Salmi. Contributo all'identificazione del testo latino* (Studi e Testi 289), Città del Vaticano 1980.

63 *Conl. 6.X.1: Quam uirtutem ita poterimus nos quoque intellectualiter possidere, si ea quae prospera sunt dextraque censentur et ea quae aduersa sunt ac sinistra dicuntur bono rectoque usu ad partem fecerimus dexteram pertinere, ut quaecumque fuerint inlata fiant nobis secundum apostolum arma iustitiae. Duabus namque partibus et ut ita dixerim manibus interiorum hominum nostrum subsistere peruidemus, nec quisquam sanctorum carere hac sinistra quam dicimus potest: sed in hoc uirtus perfecta discernitur, si utramque in dexteram bene utendo conuertat.* A previous interpretation of Aoth in a spiritual/allegorical sense, though not exactly the same as that of Cassian, had already been given by Origen, *HomJd 3,5*: «*nihil habet in se sinistrum, sed utramque manum dextram habet; hoc est enim, quod dicitur "ambidexter". Dignus vere populi princeps et ecclesiae iudex, qui nihil agat sinistrum, cuius, "quod agit dextera, nesciat sinistra", in utraque parte dexter est, in fide dexter est, in actibus dexter est, nihil habet de illis, qui collocantur "sinistris" ... puto quod secundum spiritalem intelligentiam et sancti omnes "ambidextri" dicantur*» (*Origenes Werke 7. Homilien zu Hexateuch in Rufins Übersetzung*, ed. W. A. BAEHRENS (GCS 30), Leipzig 1921, 485-486. A similar interpretation is found in Origen's homily on Ps 15 (see previous note). In this Latin translation of Origen's homilies on Judges, Rufinus has followed Jerome in rendering the word in Latin as «ambidexter».

is «inflamed with spiritual ardor». His left hand is described with even more emotionally colored language:

when the desires of his flesh are inflamed by seething emotions and impulses; when the fire of aggravations enkindles the fury of his wrath; when he is struck by the arrogance of pride or vainglory; when he is depressed by a death-dealing sadness; when he is disturbed by the ploys and the attack of acedia; and when, in the absence of any spiritual warmth, he is dulled by a kind of tepidity and irrational mournfulness, so that not only is he deserted by good and warm thoughts but psalmody, prayer, reading, and the solitude of his cell terrify him, and every virtuous practice takes on a certain unbearable and darkly loathsome quality.⁶⁴

The person so described is obviously not deprived of emotions. Cassian's purpose is obvious: to refute Jerome's and Augustine's charge that the person achieving *apatheia* lacks emotions or, in Jerome's words, is like a stone. What distinguishes the ambidextrous person from others is not that he is without emotions but that he remains unmoved (*immobilis*) from his purpose by them.

Having established the abstract qualities of the ambidextrous person, Cassian proceeds to offer concrete examples. He introduces Job, lavishing attention on his virtuous life amid good fortune and bad: «when, having gone from wealth to extreme poverty, from riches to nakedness, from health to sickness, from fame and renown to ignominy and contempt, he retained his strength of soul uncorrupted» (*incorruptam animi fortitudinem retentabat*). The detailed description of Job's use of both his right and his left hand concludes with the exhortation «If we have received good things from the hand of the Lord, shall we not accept evil? Naked I came from my mother's womb, naked shall I return there. The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away. As it has pleased the Lord, so it has been done. May the name of the Lord be blessed» (Job 2:10). Cassian next cites Joseph, after which he concludes that these and similar people are correctly called ambidextrous (ἀμφοτεροδέξιοι) because they met the challenges that the Apostle enumerates (and which Cassian had already cited in chap. 9),

64 *Conl. 6.X.3: Habet similiter et sinistram, cum temptationum turbinibus implicatur, cum ad desideria carnis incentiuorum aestibus inflammatur, cum ad iracundiae furorem perturbationum igne succenditur, eum superbiae seu cenodoxiae elatione pulsatur, cum tristitia mortem operante deprimitur, cum machinis acediae et inpugnatione concutitur cumque omni spiritali feruore subtracto quodam tepore atque inrationabili maerore torpescit, ut non solum cogitationibus rectis ac feruentibus deseratur, sed etiam psalmus, oratio, lectio, remotio cellae simul horreant et intolerabili quodam tetroque fastidio uniuersa sordeant instrumenta uirtutum, quibus cum pulsatur monachus, sinistris partibus se cognoscat urgeri.*

allowing them to use the words of the Apostle: «By the arms of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by glory and dishonor, by bad reputation and good reputation» (2 Cor 6:7). Then, using again the principle of interpreting the Scriptures by means of the Scriptures (and the key phrases «right hand» and «left hand»), Cassian introduces Solomon as a witness to this teaching, citing the Song of Songs in which the bride says: «His left hand is under my head, and his right hand will embrace me» (Sg 2:6). An allegorical exegesis is introduced in which the bride says his left hand lies under her head because adversities should be subject to the «guidance of the heart» (*principale cordis*). This expression is in fact a translation of the Stoic phrase τὸ ἡγεμονικόν.⁶⁵ In other words, the passions must be subject to the domination of reason. Although Cassian's exegesis here does not follow Origen and appears to be original, it is entirely appropriate and traditional to introduce the figure of the bride from the Song of Songs, for she represents in Origen's interpretation, and in that of Gregory of Nyssa, the soul as it reaches the stage of perfection, when it is ready for the contemplative life. The ambidextrous person has arrived at that stage, *apatheia*. Cassian avers that we too can be ambidextrous when we are not changed either by an abundance or a lack of present things.

The stage has now been set for Cassian's conclusion, namely, that Paul epitomized this type of person: «That the truly ambidextrous teacher of the Gentiles was this way himself he testifies when he says: "I have learned to be satisfied in whatever I find myself. I know how to be humbled and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in everything I have been instructed how to be full and how to be hungry and how to abound and how to endure want. I can do everything in him who strengthens me" (Phil 4:11-13)». Needless to say, Augustine had not used this quotation nor that from 2 Cor 6:7 in constructing his picture of Paul as the antithesis of the person with *apatheia*. Thus Cassian has meticulously crafted an icon of the ambidextrous person and the ideal of *apatheia* using Scriptural examples. In particular he describes Job and Paul with traditional philosophical terminology, fashioning an icon that provides a counter to Augustine's portrait of Paul.⁶⁶

65 See ORIGÈNE, *Traité des principes IV* (Livres III et IV): *Commentaire et Fragments*, ed. H. Crouzel - M. Simonetti (SC 269), Paris 1980, 20, n. 17. Both Rufinus and Jerome translated this Greek phrase, found frequently in Origen and other patristic authors, as *principale cordis*. See G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford 1961, s.v. Cassian also uses it in *Inst.* 6.II.1; 8.XXII.1; *Conl.* 5.XIV.3; 7.XII.3; 24.XII.4; 20.IX.4.

66 It is interesting and may be relevant to note that Basil in his *Letter 2* had also cited Job as an example of courage and had noted that he remained unmoved in the face of adver-

THE SEAL OF ADAMANT

Chapter 11 introduces what Cassian himself refers to as a digression in which the speaker seeks to show how the perfect man remains steadfast (*semper inmobilem*) when faced with the most onerous trials and afflictions. These trials prove virtue, cleanse or purify, and punish. At the end of this lengthy discussion, he returns to his subject and introduces a new and final image for the just man. His mind must not be soft as wax, which receives its form from some mark stamped upon it and thus has no character of its own. «On the contrary, our mind must be like a kind of adamant seal (*adamantinum signatorium*), so that it always retains its own character inviolable and shapes and transforms whatever happens to it into its own likeness, without, however, being stamped itself by the things that happen to it».⁶⁷ Jerome had ridiculed Evagrius's concept of *apatheia*, saying that it must mean that one becomes either «a stone or God». This image takes on great irony, for the person attaining *apatheia* appears like a stone, but not in the sense intended by Jerome. He is a uniquely hard stone, the kind from which seals are made.⁶⁸ He is so secure in his identity that he leaves his imprint on the

sity: διέμενεν ὁ αὐτὸς ἀταπείνωτον πανταχοῦ τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς φρόνημα διασώζων. Basil also notes in the same place that painters use models at which they look continuously in an effort to transfer the characteristics to their own work. In the same way, he says, those who seek to achieve perfection should constantly fix their gaze on the lives of the saints, images that move and act, in an effort to acquire their characteristics. This is precisely the kind of image that Cassian is seeking to produce. For a similar idea in Chrysostom, see PG 63, 484 [317] *Adversus eos qui non adfuerant*: Ταῦτα ζήλου, ἀγαπητὲ, ταῦτα μίμησαι, καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα ταύτην τὴν ὑπογραφεῖσαν ἀναλαβὼν, ἔμψυχον τῷ συνειδῶτι τῷ σῶ· κἂν ἐν ἀθυμίᾳ ᾖ, πρὸς αὐτὸν κατὰφευγε, κἂν ἐν πλούτῳ, τὸ φάρμακον ἐντεῦθεν λάμβανε, ὥστε μὴτε πτωχεῖα βαπτισθῆναι, μὴτε πλούτῳ φουσηθῆναι· κἂν παῖδας ἀποβάλῃς, ἔχεις ἐντεῦθεν τὴν παράκλησιν.

67 *Conl.* 6.XII: *Quin potius debet uelut quoddam esse adamantinum signatorium, ut inuiolabilem mens nostra figuram sui semper custodiens characteris uniuersa quae incurrerint sibi ad qualitatem sui status signet atque transformet, ipsa uero insigniri nullis incursibus possit.*

68 COLISH, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* 2, 118, states that «a stamp made of steel» is a Stoic image but gives no references. It seems more likely that the reference is to stone as noted already by Gazaecus (PL 49, 663, note b) citing Pliny, *Naturalis historia* XVII.4, to the effect that it is a stone so hard that it does not cede even to iron or fire. The Greek word originally means invincible and was applied to the hardest metal and also by Theophrastus to the hardest crystalline gem then known, the emery-stone of Naxos, an amorphous form of corundum (see *The Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. «adamant»). I have not been able to locate any other example of a seal of adamantine. Ramsey gives as references PLATO, *Leg.* 633d and ORIGEN, *CCels* 4.26. These references are to the heart and the soul being like wax; in *Theaetetus* 191d the image of wax and the seal ring is used.

world around him rather than receiving his identity from the ebb and flow of fortune. The irony magnifies because Origen, against whom Jerome directed so much polemic in his later years, had been called *Adamantius* even by Jerome himself.⁶⁹ Noteworthy also is John Chrysostom's use of the word *adamantios* to describe both Job and Paul.⁷⁰ Cassian may well have been aware of this usage, for he knew Chrysostom personally and had heard him preach during his years in Constantinople.

THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD AND THE CHANGEABILITY OF MAN

Cassian, having dealt with the charge that *apatheia* means that one is insensitive or like a stone, turns to Jerome's other charge, that it means one is God. The final section of this conference (chaps. 13-17) concentrates not only on this misunderstanding, but deals also with the ideas of spiritual progress, the practice of virtue, and, incidentally, the Pelagian concept of *inpeccantia*. Germanus' question introduces the section: «Is our mind able to hold on to one state constantly and to remain always in the same condition?» The obvious answer to this is «no», because if it were possible, then the Pelagian claim to be able to arrive at a state in which it is not possible to sin (*inpeccantia*) would be justified. After all, Jerome had savagely attacked Evagrius of Pontus precisely in the context of refuting the

69 Eusebius had noted in Book 6 of his *Ecclesiastical History* that this was a name given to Origen, a text translated by Rufinus into Latin: *Adamantius autem, erat enim et hoc nomen Origeni, cum per illud tempus Zefyrinus Romanae ecclesiae praesideret, Romam venit, sicut ipse in quodam loco scripsit dicens voti sibi fuisse, ut antiquissimam Romanorum videret ecclesiam.* (*Hist. eccl.* 6,14,10). Rufinus used the word frequently in the prefaces to his translations of Origen's works but particularly worthy of note is the fact that in his *Apologia* against Jerome, he points out that Jerome had used the name for Origen with approval. The word is found many times in Jerome's works, e.g. *Epist.* 33,4.

70 The word is found very frequently in Chrysostom's works, more frequently in fact than in any other Greek patristic writer. With regard to Paul, for example, he writes; Ἀλλὰ τὸν παῖδα τὸν τούτου θαυμάζει τῆς καρτερίας ἡ Γραφή; Καὶ ποία ἀδαμαντίνη ψυχὴ τὴν Παύλου δύναιτ' ἂν ἐπιδείξασθαι ὑπομονήν; (*De laudibus sancti Pauli apostoli* 1.8.1), CPG: 4344; SCh 300 (1982). Of Job he wrote: Οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν, ὅπερ ἀρχόμενος εἶπον, συμφορὰ ἐν ἀνθρώποις, ἣν οὐχ ὑπέμεινεν ὁ παντὸς ἀδάμαντος οὗτος στερρότερος, λιμὸν καὶ πενίαν καὶ νόσον καὶ ἀποβολὴν παίδων καὶ ζημίαν τοσούτων χρημάτων ἀθρόον ὑπενεγκών· καὶ μετ' ἐκείνο, ὅτι παρὰ γυναικὸς ἐπιβουλευθεὶς, παρὰ φίλων ἐπηρεασθεὶς, παρὰ οἰκετῶν πολεμηθεὶς, διὰ πάντων ἀπεδείκνυτο πέτρας ἀπάσης στερρότερος, καὶ ταῦτα πρὸ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῆς χάριτος. (*Adversus eos qui non adfuerant*, PG 63, 484.43). He uses the word of both Job and Paul many other times.

Pelagian claim that «man can live without sin, if he so wishes».⁷¹ He also coined the term *inpeccantia* to describe this claim and equated it with *apatheia*.⁷² He too had cited the text of Job 14:4-5, among others, to refute the Pelagian claim.

Theodore responds by introducing the concept of spiritual progress by means of a composite quotation from Paul: «As the Apostle says, it is necessary for “one who is renewed in the spirit of his mind” (Eph 4:23) to make progress every day, “always reaching out to what is ahead” (Phil 3:13)». Jerome of course had likewise cited Paul, especially Rom 7:17 and 23 as evidence of the impossibility of being without sin. Theodore then develops the notion of progress to show that either one must continue to make progress or fall back and lose what he has gained. «The mind of man», he observes, «cannot remain constantly in the same state, nor will any holy persons, while living in this flesh, possess the height of the virtues in such a way that they will abide unchangingly (*ut immobilis perseueret*)». To justify this statement he then cites Job 15:14-15: «What is a human being that he should be spotless, and one who is born of woman that he should appear righteous? Behold, among his holy ones no one is changeless, and the heavens are not pure in his sight».⁷³ Only God then can be said to be *immutabilis* by nature and this is supported with additional texts drawn from Ps 103:27 and Mal 3:6.

Theodore then turns to the question of progress: «Therefore», he says, «we must always push ourselves with unceasing care and concern to attain the virtues (*ad uirtutum studia inremissa cura ac sollicitudine*), and we must constantly occupy ourselves in their exercise (*ipsisque nos iugiter exercitiis occupare*), lest our progress suddenly cease and regression occur». Here the Latin text is of importance for it reflects the now traditional Latin terminology for the concept of *askesis*. The word *studium/studia* had been used by the first Latin translator of

71 JEROME, *Epist.* 133, 3, (CSEL 56, 244, l.22): *nihil noui adserunt, qui in huiusce modi sibi adplaudentes perfidia simplices quidem indoctos que decipiunt, sed ecclesiasticos uiros, qui in lege dei die ac nocte meditantur, decipere non ualent. pudeat eos principium et sociorum suorum, qui aiunt posse hominem sine peccato esse, si uelit - quod graece dicunt ἀναμάρτητον - et quia hoc ecclesiarum per orientem aures ferre non possunt, simulant se “sine peccato” quidem dicere, sed ἀναμάρτητον dicere non audere, quasi aliud sit “absque peccato” et aliud ἀναμάρτητον et non graecum sermonem, qui apud illos compositus est, duobus uerbis sermo latinus expresserit. si “absque peccato” dicis et ἀναμάρτητον te dicere diffiteris, damna ergo eos, qui ἀναμάρτητον praedicant. sed non facis.*

72 See SHERIDAN, «The Controversy over ἀπάθεια», 336-337.

73 Cassian has cited the text according to the Vulgate, which he does not always do: *quid est homo, ut immaculatus sit, et iustus appareat natus de muliere? Ecce inter sanctos eius nemo immutabilis, et caeli non sunt mundi in conspectu eius.*

the *Vita Antonii* to render the Greek *askesis* and Cassian uses the term frequently in various combinations to describe this classical idea.⁷⁴ Here *studium* is also coupled with the word *exercitiis* which in fact is also a rendering of *askesis*. It is important for Cassian to restate this concept in this context, for it is essential to the concept of progress in virtue. Progress is achieved precisely through practice, through exercises. Jerome in Letter 133 had associated the idea with the Pelagians (and the Stoics), who, he said, claimed that one could extirpate the passions through meditation and an assiduous practice of virtue (*meditatione et adsidua exercitatione uirtutum*).⁷⁵ Cassian returns to this concept later at the end of chap. 16 when he restates the principle that God alone is «unchangeable and good» (*inmutabilis uel bonum*). He alone does not acquire this goodness through «laborious effort» (*industriæ studio*), yet another phrase that translates *askesis*. Theodore sums up: «Therefore no virtue can be possessed unwaveringly (*inmobilitèr*) by a human being, but for it to be firmly maintained once it has been acquired it must always be preserved with the same concern and effort with which it was obtained».⁷⁶ In Cassian's view neither *askesis* nor *apatheia* leads to a state where one cannot sin nor to being divine, as Jerome asserted. But one must always aim at *apatheia*, as he makes clear in the first Conference, engaging in spiritual exercises and the practice of virtue in order to avoid regression. Sin remains a constant possibility.

Cassian had affirmed this possibility in an even more striking formulation earlier in the same chapter. When alluding to the quotation from Job 14:4-5 cited back in chap. 14, he had noted that not even the heavenly powers are immune to change: «For it is one thing to possess an unchanging nature and another not to be changed because of zeal for virtue and perseverance in the good, which is due to the grace of an immutable God. Whatever is acquired and maintained through diligence can also be lost through negligence».⁷⁷ One could not ask for

74 See M. SHERIDAN, «The Spiritual and Intellectual World of Early Egyptian Monasticism», in this volume, 66-67 and the references cited there, especially L.T.A. LORÉ, *Spiritual Terminology in the Latin Translations of the Vita Antonii with reference to fourth and fifth century monastic literature*, Utrecht 1955, 25-34.

75 Both terms belong to the traditional Latin vocabulary for the Greek concept of *askesis*. See SENECA, *Ira* II,12; JEROME, *Epist.* 69,9.

76 *Conl.* 6.XVI.3: *Nulla igitur uirtus potest immobiliter ab homine possideri, sed ut parva iugiter teneatur, necesse est eam semper illa qua adquisita est sedulitate atque industria custodiri.*

77 *Conl.* 6.XVI.1: *Aliud namque est inmutabilis naturae esse, aliud uirtutis industria bonique custodia per inmutabilis dei gratiam non mutari. 2. Quidquid enim per diligentiam uel adquiretur uel tenetur, potest etiam per neglegentiam deperire.*

a clearer anti-Pelagian formulation, but clearly it is not Jerome's position. Here Cassian has also introduced the concept of grace, for to persevere in the good is due to the grace of the immutable God.

The final chapter of the Conference focuses on the idea that spiritual ruin is caused by gradual neglect of spiritual practice rather than by a sudden fall. The insistence on practice, of course, reinforces the concept of *askesis* or spiritual exercises that has already been stressed. The Conference concludes with a reference to the point of departure - the death of the saints - thus forming an inclusion. Cassian adds that whereas at the beginning he and Germanus had been filled with sadness over the death of the saints, they were now even more filled with joy at what they had heard from Abba Theodore. This is also ironic in view of the fact that Jerome in Letter 133,1 had erroneously included joy among the passions, which, he claimed, the Pelagians and the philosophers seek to extirpate.

To summarize: a close reading reveals Cassian's sixth Conference reveals it to be a carefully crafted response to the positions of Augustine and Jerome in which they had attacked the concept of *apatheia*, equating it with both insensibility and the Pelagian notion of a state in which one cannot sin (called by Jerome *inpeccantia*). Cassian has used the traditional Latin philosophical terminology and biblical examples to present the Stoic ideal of the sage in fully Christian dress. In effect he also employed many of the elements already utilized by Jerome and Augustine but arranged them in a different way. The ideal is the ambidextrous man represented above all by Job and Paul, models of *tranquillitas*, *inmobilitas* and *constantia*, in other words, models of *apatheia*.

«DIGNE DEO».
A TRADITIONAL GREEK PRINCIPLE
OF INTERPRETATION IN LATIN DRESS

Dealing with the vice of anger in the eighth book of his Institutes, John Cassian observes that some people appeal to the Scriptures to justify their anger by pointing out that God is said to be angry in the Scriptures.¹ As examples of such texts, he quotes Ps 105(106):40 «Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against his people, and he abhorred his heritage» and Ps 6:1 «O Lord, rebuke me not in thy anger, nor chasten me in thy wrath». After noting the various ways in which the biblical authors use anthropomorphic language of God, he insists that these expressions cannot be interpreted according to their literal sense. Indeed, it would be sacrilegious and blasphemous to do so. Although it is necessary to use human language to speak of God's powers and activity, these expressions must not be interpreted ἀνθρωποπαθῶς, that is, according to the lowliness of human passion, but in a sense that is worthy of God, to whom all passions are foreign (*digne Deo qui omni perturbatione alienus est*).²

Cassian invokes what appears to be a similar principle of interpretation in Conference 23 with regard to Paul's statement in Romans 7:14: «And so, I myself with my mind serve the law of God, but with my flesh the law of sin». ³ He explains that these words must be understood in terms of «the deepest dispositions of the one who spoke them,» and that we must «examine what the

1 *Inst.* 8.I.2. In his edition, J.-C. Guy (JEAN CASSIEN, *Institutions cénobitiques*, ed. J.-C. Guy (Sch 109), Paris 1965) suggests in a note that Cassian has in mind here the anthropomorphic monks mentioned by the historians Sozomen and Socrates and described by Cassian himself in the tenth Conference. However, as will be shown, the question of God's anger had been discussed extensively in earlier Latin literature and Cassian makes use of the traditional Latin vocabulary used in that discussion.

2 *Inst.* 8.I.4. The Greek term had already been used by Jerome many times, notably in *Comm. in Esaiam* 1,1,13 and in *In Hieremiam l. vi*, 1 (CSEL 59: 177,2), 4 (CSEL 59: 233,5), 5 (CSEL 59: 333,21), 6 (CSEL 59:436,9). The latter work, composed at the end of Jerome's life, is strongly anti-Pelagian in tone and was almost certainly known to Cassian.

3 The translation is that of the Latin text as cited by Cassian, *Conl.* 23.1.5: see JOHN CASSIAN, *The Conferences*, tr. B. Ramsey (ACW 57), New York 1997, 790. All translations from the Conferences are from this edition.

blessed Apostle calls good and what he pronounces bad by comparison, not in accordance with the surface meaning of the words but with the same insight that he himself had, and to look for an understanding that is in keeping with the dignity and rank of the speaker».⁴

Are we dealing here with the same principle of interpretation applied to God as author of the Scriptures and to Paul as author of the Letter to the Romans, as at first sight it might seem to be, or are they distinct rules of interpretation? In both cases the text is to be interpreted in terms of what is known about its author or about the object of the text, in this case God.

The terminology used by Cassian, «worthy of God,» has in fact an almost exact Greek equivalent, *θεοπρεπῶς*, which is found once in Pindar and then later in Hellenistic Greek after 100 BC particularly in Philo of Alexandria.⁵ Although the notion of what is fitting or appropriate in general can be found already in the works of Homer,⁶ it was first used as an instrument for criticizing an anthropomorphic conception of the gods by Xenophanes, whose philosophical theology, according to Werner Jaeger, «has done more than anything else to smooth the way for accepting Judaeo-Christian monotheism».⁷ In one fragment Xenophanes states: «... One god is the highest among gods and men; In neither his form nor his thought is he like mortals».⁸ This God, says Xenophanes «... ever abides in the selfsame place without moving; nor is it fitting (*ἐπιπρέπει*) for him to move hither and thither, changing his place».⁹ Deity must also and above all be free from any moral weakness. In another fragment Xenophanes says «... Homer and Hesiod say that the gods do all manner of things which men would consider disgraceful: adultery, stealing, deceiving each

4 *Conl.* 23.II.1: *Superest igitur ut uirtutem sensus ex intimo dicentis metiamur adfectu, et quid beatus apostolus dixerit bonum quid ue comparatione eius pronuntiauerit malum non nuda significatione uerborum, sed eodem quo ille discutiamus intuitu, intellectum quoque eius secundum dignitatem pronuntiantis ac meritum perscrutemur.*

5 O. DREYER, *Untersuchungen zum Begriff des Gottgeziemenden in der Antike* (Spudasmata 24), Hildesheim-New York 1970. Dreyer, p. 11, says it is first found in its «rationel-ethischen» meaning in Philo, although in its cultic sense it is found once in Pindar and then in inscriptions after 100 BC.

6 DREYER, *Untersuchungen*, 11-20.

7 W. JAEGER, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers* (The Gifford Lectures 1936), Oxford 1947, 38ff.

8 JAEGER, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers*, 42. The fragment is found in CLEMENT, *Strom.* V, 109 (Xenophanes B 23). The translations of Xenophanes are from Jaeger.

9 JAEGER, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers*, 45, n. 28 (Xenophanes B 26).

other».¹⁰ He also notes the tendency of each race to project its gods in its own image and likeness, observing, «The gods of the Ethiopians are black with snub noses, while those of the Thracians are blond, with blue eyes and red hair».¹¹ And in the same vein he remarks satirically that «if cattle and horses had hands, and were able to paint with their hands, and to fashion such pictures as men do, then horses would pattern the forms of the gods after horses, and cows after cattle, giving them just such a shape as those which they find in themselves».¹²

Jaeger concludes that Xenophanes can really be understood only as a theologian. The source of his theology is not really philosophical nor does it rests on logical proof but «springs from an immediate sense of awe at the sublimity of the Divine».¹³ His criticism of the anthropomorphic conception of the gods is that all these human frailties, moral or otherwise, are out of keeping with God's essential nature. Neither human misdeeds nor speech, nor human form nor generation are appropriate to the Divine. The concept of God thus becomes a hermeneutical principle or tool.

Surprisingly little attention has been given to the role of this principle in the Latin Christian interpretation of the Scriptures with which we are here concerned.¹⁴ Therefore it may not be out of place to offer a brief survey of its use before it came to be used by Cassian. First of all, however, it is necessary to give a brief summary of its history in the Greek world, for there are several ports of entry through which it could have reached Cassian and his contemporaries in the early fifth century. Although the principle may be observed in Pindar,¹⁵ it is really with Plato that it becomes prominent in the philosophic tradition. In the well-known discussion about the education of future rulers in the *Republic*, it is asserted that the stories told by Homer and Hesiod about the gods and heroes contain lies, that is, «an erroneous representation is made of the nature of gods and heroes, - as when a painter paints a portrait not having the shadow of

10 JAEGER, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers*, 47 (Xenophanes B 11, B 12).

11 JAEGER, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers*, 47, n. 42 CLEMENT, *Strom.* VII, 22 (Xenophanes B 16).

12 JAEGER, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers*, 47, n. 41 CLEMENT, *Strom.* V, 110 (Xenophanes B 15).

13 JAEGER, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers*, 49.

14 A dissertation on the subject was written at Harvard but it has never been published: H.A. Reiche, *A History of the Concepts θεοπρεπής and ιεροπρεπής* (Harvard University Dissertation), Cambridge, Mass. 1955, 263. The scope of Reiche's work is much broader than the question of the use of this concept as an exegetical tool.

15 DREYER, *Untersuchungen*, 24-28.

a likeness to the original».¹⁶ The words μηδὲν ἐοικότα express the idea of unfitting, unseemly or inappropriate. In the ensuing discussion, the battles, plots, and quarrels among the gods are given as examples of the kind of behavior that one would not want children to imitate.¹⁷ Even if allegorical interpretations could be given to these stories, they should not be recounted to children, who are unable to distinguish what is allegorical and what is not.

Aristotle appeals to a similar criterion in support of his thesis that happiness is to be found in contemplation. After mentioning several activities, which it would be absurd to ascribe to the gods, such as making contracts, confronting dangers, practicing temperance, he remarks «if we were to run through them all, the circumstances of action would be found trivial and unworthy of the gods (μικρὰ καὶ ἀνάξια θεῶν)».¹⁸ He concludes that the only activity befitting God is contemplation and that the human activity most akin to God's to this must constitute the nature of happiness.

After Plato and Aristotle the earlier Stoics also made use of this category in order to justify the procedure of allegorizing Homer. Both Stoics and Epicureans employed this notion frequently in their critique of the Homeric gods.¹⁹

PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA

Already in the second century BC the unknown author of the *Letter of Aristeas* had admonished his readers: «For you must not fall into the degrading idea that it was out of regard to mice and weasels and other such things that Moses drew up his laws with such exceeding care. All these ordinances were made for the sake of righteousness to aid the quest for virtue and the perfecting of character».²⁰ This Hellenistic Jewish author certainly regarded the laws of the Pentateuch as the divinely inspired work of Moses, but he could not imagine that his God would be interested in making laws about mice and weasels, etc.

16 PLATO, *Republic* II,377 (Ὅταν εἰκάξῃ τις κακῶς [οὐσίαν] τῷ λόγῳ, περὶ θεῶν τε καὶ ἡρώων οἷοί εἰσιν, ὥσπερ γραφεὺς μηδὲν ἐοικότα γράφων οἷς ἂν ὁμοία βουληθῇ γράψαι); see DREYER, *Untersuchungen*, 28.

17 PLATO, *Republic* II,378.

18 ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1178b. Tr. W.D. Ross in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. R. McKeon, New York 1941, 1107.

19 See DREYER, *Untersuchungen*, 42-67 for these developments as well as for the use of the criterion by Plutarch.

20 *Letter of Aristeas*, 144. Translation from *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament 2*, ed. R.H. Charles, Oxford 1913, 108.

Such laws must be interpreted to contain ethical teaching for men. The second century Jewish exegete Aristobulos likewise seems to have felt it necessary to defend Moses from the charge of ἀλογία (wrong or literal interpretations).²¹

However, it is chiefly in the exegetical writings of Philo, that the criterion of what is «worthy of» or «fitting» for God comes to be widely applied to the interpretation of the Scriptures. For example, with reference to Gen 2:7: «the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,» he writes, «for God forbid that we should be infected with such monstrous folly (ἀτοπία) as to think that God employs for inbreathing organs such as mouth or nostrils; for God is not only not in the form of man, but belongs to no class or kind». He then explains that the expression «breath into» must be understood to mean that God sent his spirit into the human intellect so that man could have knowledge of God. The expression also has an ethical sense, because, just as the face is the dominant part of the body, so is the intellect the dominant part of the soul and God gives his spirit to this part.²²

Commenting on the statement in Gen 3:8 that the man hid himself from God, Philo writes: «Were one not to interpret it allegorically, it would be impossible to accept the statement, for God fills and penetrates all things, and has left no spot void or empty of his presence». ²³ Philo applies the terminology of what is fitting extensively in his interpretations, making use especially of the terms θεοπρεπής and ιεροπρεπής, etc. The concept of ἀνθρωποπαθές (as if having human passions) also seems to originate with Philo, who regards it as even less fitting than anthropomorphism.²⁴

It is evident in these authors that a certain conception of God dominates their exegetical practice and what is inconsistent with this conception must be

21 N. WALTER, *Der Thoraausleger Aristobulos. Untersuchungen zu seinen Fragmenten und zu pseudepigraphischen Resten der jüdischhellenistischen Literatur* (TU 86), Berlin 1964, 135.

22 *Leg.* I,36-39. Tr.: *Philo 1*, ed. F.H. Colson - G.H. Whitaker (LCL 226), Cambridge, Mass. 1929, 171.

23 *Leg.* III,4: εἰ δὲ μὴ ἀλληγορήσειέ τις, ἀδύνατον παραδέξασθαι τὸ προκείμενον· πάντα γὰρ πεπλήρωκεν ὁ θεὸς καὶ διὰ πάντων διελήλυθεν καὶ κενὸν οὐδὲν οὐδὲ ἔρημον ἀπολέλοιπεν ἑαυτοῦ. ποῖον δὲ τις τόπον ἐφέξει, ἐν ᾧ οὐχὶ θεὸς ἐστι; tr. *Philo 1*, 303.

24 See DREYER, *Untersuchungen*, 124, n. 388. In the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae all seven instances of the word from the third century BC to the first century AD are from Philo. The use of the criterion «worthy of God» and its various Greek equivalents in Philo is treated extensively by DREYER, *Untersuchungen*, 68-144.

interpreted allegorically.²⁵ The same assumption appears to underlie also Paul's citation of Deut 25:4 («You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out grain») in 1 Cor 9:8-10. He applies this text allegorically to his own situation with the comment: «Is God concerned here for oxen, or does he not rather say this for our sakes?» This echoes the sentiment of pseudo-Aristeas that God could hardly be concerned with mice and weasels.

CLASSICAL LATIN LITERATURE

This concept of what is fitting, worthy, or appropriate to divinity and a specific terminology for it enter into Latin literature with Cicero and Varro. The speech of the Stoic, Lucilius Balbus, in Cicero's *De natura deorum*, II,28,70 refers to the passage of Xenophanes quoted above in Plato's Republic. Balbus remarks sarcastically:

We know what the gods look like and how old they are, their dress ... and all about them is distorted into the likeness of human frailty. They are actually represented as liable to passions and emotions - we hear of their being in love, sorrowful, angry; according to the myths they even engage in wars and battles, and that not only when as in Homer two armies are contending and the gods take sides... These stories and these beliefs are utterly foolish; they are stuffed with nonsense and absurdity of all sorts.²⁶

Arguing for intelligence and providence as attributes of the gods and against ignorance on their part, Balbus observes, «But ignorance is foreign to the divine nature (*aliena naturae deorum*), and weakness, with a consequent incapacity to perform one's office, in no way suits with the divine majesty (*cadit in maiesta-*

25 This was already the case in the pagan world as well with regard to the interpretation of Homer. See J. PÉPIN, *La Tradition de L'Allegorie de Philon d'Alexandrie a Dante*, Paris 1987, 178-179 and the literature cited there.

26 CICERO, *De natura deorum*, II,28,70: *et formae enim nobis deorum et aetates et vestitus ornatusque noti sunt, genera praeterea coniugia cognationes, omniaque traducta ad similitudinem inbecillitatis humanae. nam et perturbatis animis inducuntur: accepimus enim deorum cupiditates aegritudines iracundias; nec vero, ut fabulae ferunt, bellis proeliisque caruerunt, nec solum ut apud Homerum cum duo exercitus contrarios alii dei ex alia parte defenderent, sed etiam ut cum Titanis ut cum Gigantibus sua propria bella gesserunt. haec et dicuntur et creduntur stultissime et plena sunt futilitatis summaeque levitatis.* English translation: Cicero 19 (LCL 268), tr. H. Rackham, Cambridge, Mass. 1951. The reference to Xenophanes was noted by JAEGER, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers*, 50.

tem deorum)».²⁷ However, other interlocutors in this dialogue also appeal to Xenophane's criterion. In refuting the Epicurean position, Cotta asks «for who could form a mental picture of such images? who could adore them and deem them worthy of worship or reverence?» (*quis aut cultu aut religione dignas iudicare?*). He goes on to say that Epicurus «does away with that which is the most essential element of supreme goodness and excellence» (*id quod maxime proprium est optimae prestantissimaeque naturae*). Here the key words are *dignas* and *proprium*. The same Cotta, criticising the Stoics' deified abstractions, states, «Fortune has a very strong claim to be counted in this list, and nobody will dissociate fortune from inconstancy and haphazard action, which are certainly unworthy of a deity».²⁸ Further on in the same critique he observes, «So far did this sort of error go, that even harmful things were not only given the names of gods but actually had forms of worship instituted in their honor.... Let us therefore banish from philosophy entirely the error of making assertions in discussing the immortal gods that are derogatory to their dignity».²⁹

The same kind of terminology is employed by Cicero to argue against the divine origin of dreams in *De divinatione*, where the interlocutor (Marcus) states, «why does God, in planning for the good of the human race, convey his warnings by means of dreams which men consider unworthy (*digna ducant*) not only of worrying about, but even of remembering? ...And hence, if most dreams are unnoticed and disregarded, either God is ignorant of that fact, or he does a vain thing in conveying information by means of dreams; but neither supposition accords with the nature of a god (*sed horum neutrum in deum cadit*)».³⁰ Quotations from Cicero could be multiplied but this is sufficient to illustrate the Latin terminology. A similar terminology can be found in certain passages of Varro and later Seneca.³¹

27 *At et ignoratio reum aliena naturae deorum est et sustinendi muneris propter inbecillitatem difficultas minime cadit in maiestatem deorum.*

28 CICERO, *De natura deorum* III,24,61: *quo in genere vel maxime est fortuna numeranda, quam nemo ab inconstantia et temeritate seiunget, quae digna certe non sunt deo.*

29 CICERO, *De natura deorum* III,24,64: *Omnis igitur talis a philosophia pellatur error, ut, cum de dis immortalibus disputemus, dicamus digna dis immortalibus.*

30 CICERO, *De divinatione* II,125. English translation: *Cicero 20* (LCL 154), tr. W.A. Falconer, Cambridge, Mass. 1923.

31 For Varro, see below the passages quoted by Augustine in *The City of God*. Examples of usage by Seneca can be found in *Dial.* 1,2,9,3 (*De providentia*); *Ben.* 7,7,3; *Ep.* 18,13,1.

TERTULLIAN

Among Latin Christian writers Tertullian is the first to use this criterion extensively, particularly in his work *Contra Marcionem*. It may reasonably be inferred that Marcion had also appealed to this norm in his own works.³² Arguing against Marcion's doctrine of a dual divinity - the Old Testament creator God and the New Testament Savior God, Tertullian states: «But the Christian truth has distinctly declared this principle, "God, if he is not one, is not", because we more properly (*dignius*) believe that that has no existence which is not as it ought to be».³³ He uses the same argument against Marcion's separation of the function of creator from his God. «State some reason worthy of God (*Deo dignam*)», he says, «why he, supposing him to exist, created nothing».³⁴ The reason, he insists, must be limited to one of two: either he was unwilling to create or unable. «Now, that he was unable, is a reason unworthy of God».³⁵ Nothing in fact is so «proper and worthy of God» (*propria et Deo digna*) as the testimony of the creation.³⁶ «The world,» says Tertullian, «is not unworthy of God, for God has made nothing unworthy of Himself».³⁷ Against the Marcionite depreciation of the world, he adds, «And yet, if to have been the author of our creation, such as it is, be unworthy of God, how much more unworthy of Him is it to have created absolutely nothing at all!»³⁸ He goes on to note and enumerate, against the argument of the unworthiness of the world, all the elements of the world that philosophers have regarded as divine, concluding: «It is, indeed, enough for me

32 See TERTULLIEN, *Contre Marcion 1*, ed. R. Braun (SCH 365), Paris 1990, 46. Braun notes that this criterion is invoked more than thirty times in this work.

33 TERTULLIAN, *Marc.* I,3: *Sed ueritas christiana destricte pronuntiauit: deus si non unus est, non est, quia dignius credimus non esse quodcumque non ita fuerit, ut esse debeat.* The translations of Tertullian are from *The Ante-Nicene Christian Library* 7, tr. P. Holmes, Edinburgh 1868.

34 TERTULLIAN, *Marc.* I,11,6: *Aut exhibe rationem deo dignam, cur nihil condiderit, si est; quia condidisset, si fuisset, illo scilicet praeiudicio, quo et nostrum deum non alias manifestum est esse quam quia totum condidit hoc.*

35 TERTULLIAN, *Marc.* I,11,7: *Sed non potuisse indignum deo est*

36 TERTULLIAN, *Marc.* I,13,1. *Cum deum hoc gradu expellimus, cui nulla conditio tam propria et deo digna quam creatoris testimonium praesignarit, narem contrahentes impudentissimi marcionitae conuertuntur ad destructionem operum creatoris.*

37 TERTULLIAN, *Marc.* I,13,2: *Ergo nec mundus deo indignus; nihil etenim deus indignum se fecisset, etsi mundum homini, non sibi fecit, etsi omne opus inferius est suo artifice.*

38 TERTULLIAN, *Marc.* I,13,3: *Et tamen, si quale quid fecisse indignum est deo, quanto indignius deo est nihil eum omnino fecisse uel indignum, quo posset etiam digniorum auctor sperari.*

that natural elements, foremost in site and state, should have been more readily regarded as divine than as unworthy of God».³⁹

Turning to the question of God's goodness and other qualities that can be attributed to him, Tertullian uses similar arguments.

As touching this question of goodness, we have in these outlines of our argument shown it to be in no way compatible with Deity (*minime deo adaequare*), - as being neither natural, nor rational, nor perfect, but wrong, and unjust, and unworthy of the very name of goodness (*bonitatis nomine indignam*), -because, as far as the congruity of the divine character is concerned (*in quantum deo congruat*), it cannot indeed be fitting that that Being should be regarded as God who is alleged to have such a goodness, and that not in a modified way, but simply and solely. For it is, furthermore, at this point quite open to discussion, whether God ought to be regarded as a Being of simple goodness, to the exclusion of all those other attributes, sensations, and affections, which the Marcionites indeed transfer from their god to the Creator, and which we acknowledge to be worthy characteristics of the Creator too (*in Creatore ut deo dignos*), but only because we consider Him to be God. Well, then, on this ground we shall deny him to be God in whom all things are not to be found which befit the Divine Being (*quae deo digna sint*).⁴⁰

Tertullian insists that Marcion's God is hopelessly weak because Marcion refuses to ascribe to him the function of judge and the emotions that must accompany such a function, which include anger. He concludes: «If it is unbecoming for God to discharge a judicial function, or at least only so far becoming that He may merely declare His unwillingness, and pronounce His prohibition, then He may not even punish for an offense when it is committed. Now, nothing is so unworthy of the Divine Being as not to execute retribution on what He has disliked and forbidden».⁴¹

39 TERTULLIAN, *Marc.* I,13,5: *Et superiores quidem situ aut sttu substantias sufficit facillius deos habitas quam deo indignas.*

40 TERTULLIAN, *Marc.* I,25,1-2: *Quod adtinet ad bonitatis quaestionem, his lineis deduximus eam minime deo adaequare, ut neque ingenitam neque rationalem neque perfectam, sed et improbam et iniustam et ipso iam bonitatis nomine indignam, quod scilicet i quantum deo congruat, in tantum deum non esse conueniat qui de tali bonitate etiam praeferatur, nec de tali modo uerum et sola. Iam enim et hoc discuti par est, an deus de sola bonitate censendus sit. Negatis ceteris adpendicibus sensibus et adfectibus, quos marcionitae quidem a deo suo abigunt in creatorem, nos uero [et] agnoscimus in creatore ut deo dignos, et ex hoc quoque negabimus deum in quo non omnia, quae deo digna sint, constant.*

41 TERTULLIAN, *Marc.* I,26,3: *Si indignum est deum iudicare, aut si eatenus dignum est deum iudicare, qua tantummodo nolit et prohibeat, non etiam defendat admissum, atquin nihil deo tam indignum quam non exequi quod noluit et prohibuit.*

In the second book of this work Tertullian returns to the question of divine punishments and, using the Stoic notion that the only real evil is the moral one, is able to insist that the divine punishments «are, no doubt, evil to those by whom they are endured, but still on their own account good, as being just and defensive of good and hostile to sin. In this respect they are, moreover, worthy of God».⁴² He lists the punishments inflicted on the Egyptians in Exodus as examples.

Defending the law and the prophets from the Marcionite charge that they were unworthy of God, Tertullian insists that, quite apart from their figurative sense, even on the literal level they exercised a positive function and «the prophets were also ordained by the self-same goodness of God, teaching precepts worthy of God».⁴³ Another of the Marcionite objections to the God of the Old Testament was evidently that he swears oaths (Gen 22:16; Deut 32:40; Isa 45:23). To this Tertullian replies that «He swears by Himself, in order that you may believe God, even when He swears that there is besides Himself no other God at all». And he concludes with the extraordinary statement «Hence, if He swears both in His promises and His threatenings, and thus extorts faith which at first was difficult, nothing is unworthy of God which causes men to believe in God».⁴⁴ This, if taken at face value, considerably broadens the scope of the concept «worthy of God». He invokes a similar principle in considering the question of the Incarnation and asserts

that God would have been unable to hold any intercourse with men, if He had not taken on Himself the emotions and affections of man, by means of which He could temper the strength of His majesty, which would no doubt have been incapable of endurance to the moderate capacity of man, by such a humiliation as was indeed unworthy (*sibi quidem indigna*) of Himself, but necessary for man, and such as on this very account became worthy of God, because nothing is so worthy of God as the salvation of man.⁴⁵

42 TERTULLIAN, *Marc.* II,14,3: *Quae quidem illis mala sunt, quibus rependuntur, ceterum suo nomine bona, qua iusta et bonorum defensoria et delictorum inimica atque in hoc ordine deo digna.*

43 TERTULLIAN, *Marc.* II,19,1-2: *Ad hoc beneficium, non onus, legis adiuuandum etiam prophetas eadem bonitas dei ordinavit, docentes deo digna.*

44 TERTULLIAN, *Marc.* II,26,2: *Proinde si et in promissionibus aut comminationibus iurat, fidem in primordiis arduam extorquens, nihil deo indignum est, quod efficit deo credere.*

45 TERTULLIAN, *Marc.* II,27,1: *Iam nunc, ut et cetera compendio absoluam, quaecumque adhuc ut pusilla et infirma et indigna colligitis ad destructionem creatoris, simplici et certa ratione proponam: deum non potuisse humanos congressus inire, nisi humanos et sensus et ad-*

In the end, however, Tertullian gives in to the weight of the philosophical tradition regarding the impassibility (ἀπάθεια) of God by dividing the burden between Father and Son.⁴⁶ All that is regarded as unworthy of God throughout the economy of salvation can be attributed to the Son acting for the unseen Father. He concludes in this often quoted statement:

Whatever attributes therefore you require as worthy of God, must be found in the Father, who is invisible and unapproachable, and placid, and (so to speak) the God of the philosophers; whereas those qualities which you censure as unworthy must be supposed to be in the Son, who has been seen, and heard, and encountered, the Witness and Servant of the Father, uniting in Himself man and God, God in mighty deeds, in weak ones man, in order that He may give to man as much as He takes from God.⁴⁷

As Fredouille observes, this is a capitulation more to the philosophical tradition than to the arguments of Marcion.⁴⁸ These examples must suffice to illustrate the extensive use made of this principle in the thought of Tertullian. With Tertullian, however, the question of what is worthy or unworthy of God has become a principle of interpreting the Scriptures and not merely an instrument of apologetic for the Christian God against the pagan gods.⁴⁹

LACTANTIUS

The apologetic use of the terminology is developed extensively by Arnobius (*Adversus Nationes*) and Lactantius (*Institutiones divinae*), in both of which the

fectus suscepisset, per quos uim maiestatis suae, intolerabilem utique humanae mediocritati, humilitate temperaret, sibi quidem indigna, homini autem necessaria, et ita iam deo digna, quia nihil tam dignum deo quam salus hominis.

46 For this tradition, see H. FROHNHOFEN, *Apatheia tou theou. Über die Affektlosigkeit Gottes in der griechischen Antike und bei den griechischsprachigen Kirchenvätern bis zu Gregorios Thaumaturgos* (Europäische Hochschulschriften XXIII/318), Frankfurt/M-Bern 1987.

47 TERTULLIAN, Marc. II,27,6: *Igitur quaecumque exigitis deo digna, habebuntur in patre inuisibili incongressibili que et placido et, ut ita dixerim, philosophorum deo, quaecumque autem ut indigna reprehenditis, deputabuntur in filio et uiso et audito et congresso, arbitro patris et ministro, miscente in semetipso hominem et deum, in uirtutibus deum, in pusillitatibus hominem, ut tantum homini conferat quantum deo detrahāt.*

48 J.-C. FREDOUILLE, *Tertullien et la conversion de la culture antique* (Études Augustiniennes 47), Paris 1972, 161-162.

49 On Tertullian's exegesis in general, one may consult: T.P. O'MALLEY, *Tertullian and the Bible. Language, Imagery, Exegesis*, Nijmegen-Utrecht 1967. However, the author does not deal with our subject.

vocabulary of *dignus*, *dedecus*, *maiestas*, *in deum convenire*, *inconueniens est deo*, *disconueniens deo*, *alienum a deo*, *proprius deo* and *(non) cadere in deum* abounds. With Lactantius, however, we find the concept of that which is worthy of God used to defend the notion of God's anger even more forcefully than in Tertullian. Lactantius attacks the Epicurean and Stoic use of the concept to deny the possibility of divine anger, making explicit reference to the transmission of this philosophic tradition through Posidonius by way of Cicero, who is the principal source for the terminology, although he makes reference to Seneca and other authors as well. Against the Epicurean view he writes:

Accordingly, he is not God if he is not moved (which is proper to a living being), and if he does not do anything that is impossible to man (which is proper to God [*proprium dei*]), if he has no will whatsoever, no action, in short, no administration which is worthy of a god (*deo digna sit*). What greater, what more worthy administration (*dignior administratio*) can be assigned to God than the governance of the world, than the care of living things, and especially of the human race to which all earthly things are subject? What beatitude, then, can there be in God if quiet and immobile He is ever inactive; if He is deaf to those who pray, if blind to those who worship Him? What is so worthy (*dignum*), so befitting to God (*proprium deo*) as providence? But if he cares for nothing, provides for nothing, He has lost all divinity.⁵⁰

It is not our purpose here to follow the arguments advanced by Lactantius but only to note his use of the traditional Latin terminology for this concept. In fact Lactantius does not use the concept as an exegetical tool. His only appeal to Scriptural texts is to justify human anger and therefore *a fortiori* divine anger.⁵¹

50 LACTANTIUS, *De Ira*, 4,3. *Deus igitur non est, si nec mouetur, quod est proprium uiuentis, nec facit aliquid impossibile homini, quod est proprium dei, si omnino nullam habet uoluntatem, nullum actum, nullam denique administrationem quae deo digna sit.* 4. *Et quae maior, quae dignior administratio deo adsignari potest quam mundi gubernatio, quam cura uiuentium maxime quae generis humani cui omnia terrena subiecta sunt?* 5. *Quae igitur in deo potest esse beatitudo, si semper quietus et immobilis torpet, si precantibus surdus est, si colentibus caecus? Quid tam dignum, tam proprium deo quam prouidentia?* 6. *Sed si nihil curat, nihil prouidet, amisit omnem diuinitatem.* English translation: LACTANTIUS, «The Wrath of God (*De ira dei*)», in *The Minor Works*, tr. M.F. McDonald (FC 54), Washington, D.C. 1965, 59-118.

51 LACTANTIUS, *De Ira* 21. He alludes to Ps 4:5 and Eph 4:26. For Lactantius' treatment of the problem of God's anger in general, see: E.F. MICKA, *The Problem of Divine Anger in Arnobius and Lactantius* (The Catholic University of America Studies in Christian Antiquity 4), Washington, D.C. 1943.

AUGUSTINE

The same terminology can be found occasionally in the writings of Hilary, Ambrose and Jerome, but it abounds in Augustine, who is of course well acquainted with philosophic criticism of the classical or poetic portrait of the gods found in Cicero and other Latin writers. In the City of God he writes:

It is recorded that the very learned pontiff Scaevola had distinguished about three kinds of gods--one introduced by the poets, another by the philosophers, another by the statesmen. The first kind he declares to be trifling, because many unworthy things have been invented by the poets concerning the gods (*quod multa de diis fingantur indigna*); the second does not suit states, because it contains some things that are superfluous, ... And, truly, in these same books, Scaevola is not silent as to his reason for rejecting the poetic sort of gods, - to wit, «because they so disfigure the gods that they could not bear comparison even with good men, when they make one to commit theft, another adultery....»⁵²

He also quotes Varro to the same effect:

«... they call that kind mythical which the poets chiefly use; physical, that which the philosophers use; civil, that which the people use. As to the first I have mentioned», says he, «in it are many fictions, which are contrary to the dignity and nature of the immortals (*multa contra dignitatem et naturam immortalium ficta*). For we find in it that one god has been born from the head, another from the thigh, another from drops of blood; also, in this we find that gods have stolen, committed adultery, served men; in a word, in this all manner of things are attributed to the gods, such as may befall (*cadere*), not merely any man, but even the most contemptible man».⁵³

52 AUGUSTINE, *Civ.* IV,27: *relatum est in litteras doctissimum pontificem scaeuolam disputasse tria genera tradita deorum: unum a poetis, alterum a philosophis, tertium a principibus ciuitatis. primum genus nugatorium dicit esse, quod multa de diis fingantur indigna; secundum non congruere ciuitatibus, quod habeat aliqua superuacua, aliqua etiam quae obsit populis nosse. de superuacuis non magna causa est; solet enim et a iuris peritis dici: superflua non nocent. quae sunt autem illa, quae prolata in multitudinem nocent? ... poeti-cum sane deorum genus cur scaeuola respuat, eisdem litteris non tacetur: quia sic uidelicet deos deformant, ut nec bonis hominibus comparentur; cum alium faciant furari, alium adul-terare....* The English translations of Augustine are by M. Dods: *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* 2, ed. P. Schaff, Edinburgh 1886.

53 AUGUSTINE, *Civ.* VI,5: *mythicon appellant, quo maxime utuntur poetae; physicon, quo philosophi, ciuile, quo populi. primum, inquit, quod dixi, in eo sunt multa contra dignitatem et naturam immortalium ficta. in hoc enim est, ut deus alius ex capite, alius ex femore sit, alius ex guttis sanguinis natus; in hoc, ut dii furati sint, ut adulterarint, ut seruierint homini;*

Augustine also uses the criterion of «worthiness» not only for apologetic purposes but as an instrument of interpretation. Commenting on Psalm 6:3 «O Lord, reprove me not in your anger», he writes, «Yet this emotion must not be attributed to God, as if to a soul, of whom it is said, “but Thou, O Lord of power, judgest with tranquillity.” Now that which is tranquil, is not disturbed. Disturbance then does not attach to God as judge (*non ergo cadit in deum iudicem perturbation*): but what is done by His ministers, in that it is done by His laws, is called His anger».⁵⁴ Similarly commenting on Psalm 9:13 «For requiring their blood, he has remembered» he observes: «But let no one suppose “He has remembered” to be so used, as though forgetfulness can attach to God (*quasi obliuio cadat in Deum*); but since the judgment will be after a long interval, it is used in accordance with the feeling of weak men, who think God has forgotten, because He does not act as speedily as they wish».⁵⁵ Likewise in commenting on Psalm 41, he notes that mutability does not attach to God (*ista mutabilitas non cadit in deum*).⁵⁶ The phrase «worthy of God» also finds ample use in Augustine’s works. In the introduction to book 4 of his work unfinished work *Against Julian*, he promises to show that the laws of God are worthy of the governance of God and that the works of God are most worthy of God as Creator (*haec postremo digna esse deo rectore, illa deo dignissima conditore*).⁵⁷

One final passage from Augustine should be quoted because of its similarity to the rules enunciated by Cassian. In the third book of the *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine makes the observation: «Those things, again, whether only sayings or whether actual deeds, which appear to the inexperienced to be shameful, and which are ascribed to God, or to men whose holiness is put before us as an example, are wholly figurative, and the hidden kernel of meaning they contain

denique in hoc omnia diis adtribuuntur, quae non modo in hominem, sed etiam quae in contemptissimum hominem cadere possunt?

54 AUGUSTINE, *Enarrat. Ps.*, Psalm 6, par.3: *qui tamen motus, non tamquam animae deo tribuendus est, de quo dictum est: tu autem, domine uirtutum, cum tranquillitate iudicas. quod autem tranquillum est, non est perturbatum. non ergo cadit in deum iudicem perturbation; sed quod in eius ministris fit, quia per leges eius fit, ira eius dicitur.* For the same phrase see also Psalm 105, par. 32 and *Questionum in heptateuchum libri septem*, Genesis, quest. 39.

55 AUGUSTINE, *Enarrat. Ps.*, Psalm 9, par. 13: *memoratus est autem, nemo ita positum putet, quasi obliuio cadat in deum; sed quia post longum tempus futurum est iudicium, secundum affectum infirmorum hominum positum est, qui quasi oblitum deum putant, quia non tam cito facit quam ipsi uolunt.* For the same admonition, see also the comments on Psalm 87, par. 5 and Psalm 118, sermo 15, par. 1.

56 AUGUSTINE, *Enarrat. Ps.*, Psalm 41, par. 7.

57 AUGUSTINE, *Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum* IV (PL 45: 1338, l.46).

is to be picked out as food for the nourishment of charity».⁵⁸ The principle of interpretation, in other words, must be our concept of God or our knowledge of the character of the person in question.

ORIGEN

Although chronologically Origen precedes Augustine and although his influence on Latin exegesis was extensive even before his works were translated in Latin by Rufinus, it is through these translations that his work becomes part of the Latin exegetical patrimony. As might be expected from one strongly influenced by the Greek philosophical tradition and by Philo, the concept of what is worthy of God plays a significant role in his exegetical work. Already in his earlier work, *Peri Archon* (*De Principiis*), where the more general principles are set forth, Origen uses this concept both as a theological principle and as an exegetical tool. In the first book, he asserts that the idea of the Father begetting the Son must be understood as «some exceptional process, worthy of God (*deo dignum*), to which we can find no comparison whatever».⁵⁹ Speaking of participation in the Holy Spirit, he suggests that through grace a man may make such progress «that the life which he received from God shall be such as is worthy of God (*deo dignum*), who gave it to be pure and perfect».⁶⁰

In the second book, treating the question of the unity of the Testaments, he discusses the statements of the Old Testament where God is said to be angry and points out that similar things can be found also in the New Testament. This leads to the general conclusion: «whenever we read of the anger of God, whether in the Old or the New Testament, we do not take such statements literally, but look for the spiritual meaning in them, endeavoring to understand them in a way that is worthy of God» (*deo dignum*).⁶¹ A similar principle is stated in an even more general way in the fourth book of this work, which is of course dedicated to the principles of interpretation of the Scriptures:

58 AUGUSTINE, *Doctr. chr.* III,18: *quae autem quasi flagitiosa imperitis uidentur, siue tantum dicta siue etiam facta sunt uel ex dei persona uel ex hominum, quorum nobis sanctitas commendatur, tota figurata sunt, quorum ad caritatis pastum enucleanda secreta sunt.*

59 *PArch* 1,2,4: *sed necesse est exceptum aliquid esse et deo dignum, cuius nulla prorsum comparatio non in rebus solum...*

60 *PArch* 1,3,8.

61 *PArch* 4,4: *Sed nos sive in veteri sive in novo testamento, cum de ira dei legimus, non secundum litteram quae dicuntur advertimus, sed spiritalem intellectum requirimus in talibus, ut ita sentiamus, sicut intellegere de deo dignum est.*

for we recognise that the letter is often impossible and inconsistent with itself, that is, that things, not only irrational but even impossible are occasionally described by it; but that we are to realise that with this external story are interwoven certain other matters which, when considered and comprehended in their inward meaning, provide us with a law which is useful to men and worthy of God (*deo dignam*).⁶²

This is of course the well known and controversial principle of *defectus litterae* in which the *irrationalia* (= τὰ ἄλογα) and the *impossibilia* (= τὰ ἀδύνατα) serve as triggers for a spiritual interpretation.⁶³ It is worth underlining the double criterion for meaning, at least as we have it in the Latin text. It must be «useful to men» and «worthy of God».

In practice Origen uses this principle frequently. In the homilies on Genesis, for example, he notes that the circumcision of the Church is honorable, holy and worthy of God (*deo dignam*), whereas that taken literally is unseemly, detestable, disgusting and vulgar.⁶⁴ Likewise preaching on the marriage of Isaac in Genesis 24, Origen comments that if one interprets these things figuratively «he will find a marriage worthy of God (*nuptias Deo dignas*); for his soul is united with God».⁶⁵ In fact, for Origen the criterion of «worthy of God» becomes not only a tool for dealing with difficult passages, but a motivation for

62 *PArch* 4,3,4: *Haec autem omnia nobis dicta sunt, ut ostendamus quia hic prospectus est spiritus sancti, qui nobis scripturas divinas donare dignatus est, non ut ex sola littera vel in omnibus ex ea aedificari possimus, quam frequenter impossibilem nec sufficientem sibi adesse depræhendimus, id est per quam interdum non solum irrationalia, verum etiam impossibilia designantur; sed ut intellegamus contexta esse quaedam huic visibili historiae, quae interius considerata et intellecta utilem hominibus et deo dignam proferunt legem.* The latter phrase is missing in the Greek text. A similar formulation is found earlier in IV,2,9 where the Greek text is τοῦ θεοῦ ἄξιον. The English translation is from ORIGEN, *On First Principles*, tr. G.W. Butterworth, New York 1966, 292.

63 For further discussion of the principle of *defectus litterae* see M. Simonetti, *Lettera e/o Allegoria. Un contributo alla storia dell'esegesi patristica*, Rome 1985, 85-86, 102, 115 et passim and ORIGÈNE, *Traité des principes IV* (Livres III et IV): *Commentaire et Fragments*, ed. H. Crouzel - M. Simonetti (SCh 269), Paris 1980, 191-194. The idea is not original with Origen but can be found in Philo, Hippolytus, Irenaeus and in the philosophical interpretations of the Homeric poems where it was employed to allegorize passages about the gods that were regarded as excessively anthropomorphic. See also PÉPIN, *La Tradition de L'Allegorie*, 167-186.

64 *HomGn*, III,6: *si non etiam ipse sentis et intelligis hanc ecclesiae circumcisionem honestam, sanctam, Deo dignam, illam vestram turpem, foedam, deformem, ipso etiam habitu et aspectu kakevmfaton praeferentem.* See also III,5 where he speaks of a circumcision «worthy of the word of God (*dignam circumcisionem uerbi Dei*)».

65 *HomGn*, X,5.

finding a meaning for the entire text that is worthy of God. All of the Scriptures are the work of the Holy Spirit and all of them have a spiritual meaning, if not a literal one.⁶⁶ Hence a meaning worthy of God or of the word of God or of the Holy Spirit can be found for all of them. After citing at length the prescriptions of Leviticus for sin offerings, Origen remarks that if one holds only to the literal sense of the passage it becomes an obstacle and cause of ruin for the Christian religion but if one discovers a sense worthy of God (*digne Deo*) to whom the Scriptures are attributed, then one can become a spiritual Jew.⁶⁷ Similarly at the end of an explanation of the prophecy of Balaam in Numbers, Origen exhorts the congregation to pray that that he will be able to explain the others as well in a manner worthy of God and of the Holy Spirit who has inspired them.⁶⁸

One final passage from Origen's *Commentary on Romans* must be mentioned in which he is seeking to explain Paul's assertion in Rom 7:18 that «I know that no good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh». He asks how, if the good does not dwell in his flesh, can he say that our body is a temple of God and temple of the Holy Spirit? Then he raises the question as to how also other affirmations such as that he has been made a slave to the law of sin, can be appropriate to the dignity of an apostle, and in particular to Paul in whom Christ lives and speaks.⁶⁹ This appears to be the immediate literary background of the passage from Cassian quoted at the beginning dealing with the same verses of Romans. Cassian, however, omitted the reference to Christ living and speaking in Paul and left only the reference to the dignity of the author Paul. Here in fact in Origen there appear to be united two considerations or two criteria for judging the sense of a passage. One is the question of what is worthy of God or the Holy Spirit or of Christ. The other is the prosopological question, that is, the question of who is actually speaking in a given passage.

66 See *PArch* 4,2,4-5.

67 *HomLev* V,1 (GCS, Origenes VI, 332-333): *Si vero discutiatur et inveniatur, quo sensu haec dicta sunt et digne Deo, qui haec dicere scribitur, advertantur, fiet quidem Iudaeus, qui haec audit, sed non ille >qui in manifesto<, sed >qui in occulto Iudaeus est<.*

68 *HomNum* XVI,9 (GCS, Origenes VII, 153): *Oremus autem Dominum, ut nobis etiam ad cetera, quae ab eo prophetata sunt, intelligenda lucidiores quosque et veritati proximos sensus aperire dignetur, ut in spiritu considerantes, quae per spiritum scripta sunt, et >spiritualibus spiritalia comparantes< digne Deo et Sancto Spiritu, qui haec inspiravit, quae scripta sunt explicemus, in Christo Iesu Domino nostro, cui >gloria et imperium in saecula saeculorum. Amen.<*

69 ORIGEN, *ComRm* VI,9 (PG14, 1085BC): *Sed et caetera in quibus confitetur a legi quae in membris suis est, et repugnat legi mentis suae, captivum duci se in lege peccati; quomodo apostolicae convenit dignitati, et Paulo praecipue, in quo Christus et vivit et loquitur?*

Origen goes on to explain that the Scriptures are in the habit of changing without notice persons, things, and situations. When Paul says in Rom 7:14 «We know in fact that the law is spiritual», he is speaking with apostolic authority. But when he says «but I am carnal, sold into the power of sin», he is speaking as a doctor of the church who has assumed for himself the role of the one who is weak.⁷⁰ Here Origen is making use of a device with a long history extending back to the interpretation of Homer for which there is ample documentation and of which he makes use often in other works.⁷¹ The reason here, however, for invoking this device is that the statement is not appropriate to the dignity of an apostle in whom Christ lives and speaks. Cassian has omitted this last phrase because he does not want to adopt Origen's solution of a change of *persona* in Paul's affirmations. The reasons for this, which are to be found in the context of the anti-Pelagian dispute over sinlessness, lie beyond the scope of this paper.

CONCLUSION

We have attempted to give a brief sketch of the career of an exegetical tool that has received little attention thus far and which deserves more study in both the Greek and Latin exegetical traditions. It is an ambiguous instrument and has been used to argue for opposite positions, particularly regarding the question of attributing passions to God. The outcome of its use depends on the concept of God, yet it is also a tool for refining the concept of God. It is clearly a norm that comes from outside the text and yet the text may influence the concept of God. To return to our point of departure: the two rules of interpretation cited by Cassian should probably be understood as distinct rules, given the background of the second one in Origen, but they have a common source in the Greek cultural sense of what is fitting.⁷²

In the first case, the nature of God, known independently of the particular text, is the rule which determines whether the text may be interpreted literally or not. In the second case, the nature of the author, known from his writings as a whole, becomes the norm of interpretation.

70 ORIGEN, *ComRm* VI,9 (PG 14, 1086A).

71 See M.-J. RONDEAU, *Les Commentaires patristiques du Psautier (IIIe - Ve siècles) 2. Exégèse prosopologique et Théologie*, Rome 1985, 40-43, who quotes this passage but omits the reference to what is worthy of the apostolic dignity.

72 See the now classical essay on the subject: M. POHLENZ, «τὸ πρέπον: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des griechischen Geistes», in *Kleine Schriften 1*, ed. H. Dörrie, Hildesheim 1965, 100-139.

JOHN CASSIAN AND THE FORMATION OF AUTHORITATIVE TRADITION

Already in the Preface to the Institutes Cassian announced, «nor shall I strive to weave a tale of God's marvelous works and miracles», adding that «apart from wonderment they contribute nothing to the reader's instruction in the perfect life».¹ The same contrast is underlined a few lines later. Cassian returns to the theme later in the Conferences, where he remarks sharply that Jesus did not say to his disciples, «"Come and learn from me" ... how to cast out demons with heavenly power, nor how to cleanse lepers, nor how to enlighten the blind, nor how to raise the dead», but rather, «learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart».² There follows in fact a somewhat extended diatribe against those who aim to produce miracles, which may be summarized in Cassian's own statement: «Finally, it is in many respects a more splendid virtue and a more sublime accomplishment to cure the diseases of one's own soul than those of another's body».³ In his exclusion of the miraculous Cassian is consistent and goes so far as to eliminate the miraculous from the sources which he uses. Thus in relating the famous story of John Kolobos, who, when ordered by his spiritual father to plant a dry stick in the ground and water it, did so for three years until finally it miraculously produced edible fruit, Cassian simply eliminates the miraculous aspect. At the end of a year, the elder pulls up the stick from the ground and orders the young monk not to water it anymore. The only fruit is the fruit of obedience in the soul of the monk.⁴ This is in line with his insistence in Confer-

1 *Inst., praef.* 8. English translations of Cassian are taken from JOHN CASSIAN, *The Conferences*, tr. B. Ramsey (ACW 57), New York 1997, and JOHN CASSIAN, *The Institutes*, tr. B. Ramsey (ACW 58), New York 2000.

2 *Conl.* 15.VII.1. A similar contrast may be found in Augustine, *Sermo* 69,1 in reference to the same citation from Matt 11:29: "Tollite iugum meum super vos, et discite a me, non mundum fabricare, non cuncta visibilia et invisibilia creare, non in ipso mundo miracula facere, et mortuos suscitare; sed quoniam mitis sum et humilis corde".

3 *Conl.* 15.VIII.

4 *Apophthegmata* G, Joannes Kolobos 1 (PG 65, 204C); PJ XIV 3 (PL 73, 984 B). Cf. H.O. WEBER, *Die Stellung des J. C. zur ausserpachomianischen Mönchstradition. Eine Quellenuntersuchung*, Münster 1961, 111-112, who draws a questionable contrast between the miraculous in the anchoritic tradition and the need for blind obedience in the cenobitic

ence 6 on the Stoic principle that the only true good is that of the soul, namely, virtue.⁵

In the context of the ancient monastic literature already existing when Cassian was writing, this exclusion of the miraculous is remarkable, if not indeed unparalleled. Cassian is careful of course not to deny the reality of the miraculous. It is just totally irrelevant to the search for perfection. Indeed, it can be a hindrance or a stumbling block if one seeks it. When one thinks of the role of the miraculous in the first great classic of monastic literature, the *Life of Antony*, the contrast is even more striking. The pages of the latter are filled with wonders, especially in the struggle against the demons, which manifest the power of God operating in Antony. The difference of approach is particularly clear in the conversation with the philosophers in chapters 72-80, where Antony appeals to the «signs and wonders that demonstrate that Christ is no longer a man, but God».⁶ The «demonstration through arguments» attributed to the philosophers is contrasted with the faith that precedes argumentation and is a response to signs and wonders. The healings worked by Antony are a continuation of those of Christ and serve to legitimate his way of life as well as to manifest the continuing validity of faith in Christ.⁷

In Jerome's lives of Paul, Hilarion and Malchas, inspired by Athanasius' *Life of Antony*, the miraculous element is multiplied to such an extent that it does indeed seem to contribute nothing but «wonderment». In the *Life of Hilarion* the miracles include the burning of a dragon and the calming of the sea.⁸ Rufinus, following the lead of Eusebius, did not hesitate to embellish his continuation of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* with the miraculous. In the context of the persecution of the monks by the Arian bishop Lucius following the death of Athanasius, numerous miracles, including Macarius' cure of the blind cubs of the hyena, are invoked to legitimate the orthodox faith.⁹ The stories of the

setting for which Cassian would be writing. See also W. BOUSSET, *Apophthegmata. Studien zur Geschichte des ältesten Mönchtums* (Aus dem Nachlass herausgegeben von Theodor Hermann und Gustav Krüger), Tübingen 1923, 71-75 (Cassian).

5 *Conl.* 6.III. See M. SHERIDAN, «Job and Paul. Philosophy and Exegesis in Cassian's Sixth Conference», in this volume, 368-370.

6 *Vit. Ant.* 75.

7 *Vit. Ant.* 80.

8 *Vita Hilarionis* 28-29.

9 RUFINUS, *Hist. eccles.* II,4. Rufinus' history is the continuation of his Latin translation of Eusebius' *Historia ecclesiastica*. The Latin text may conveniently be found in: RUFINO DI

monks are in fact part of a sacred history.¹⁰ Numerous visions and miracles are also attributed to the monastic founder Martin of Tours by Sulpicius Severus.¹¹

Compared with all these accounts, the conferences of Cassian resemble much more the «demonstrations through arguments» of the philosophers despised in the Life of Antony. In fact the philosophical element is very strong in Cassian. Cassian's focus is on «the reader's instruction in the perfect life», as he announced in the Preface to the Institutes, where he also declares that he intends to treat things «left untouched by our predecessors». Not the «marvellous works of God» but the «improvement of our behavior and the attainment of the perfect life» will be his subject matter.

In order to maintain this focus, Cassian makes use of the idea of the «inner man», an image with a long history, found already in Plato and more recently used by both Jerome and Augustine.¹² The «inner man» is contrasted with the «outer man», which is the subject matter of the Institutes proper, that is, of the first four books, including the arrangement of the canonical hours and the clothing of the monks.¹³ Fasting from bodily food likewise pertains to the outer man and must be complemented by the fasting of the interior man from noxious food such as envy and vainglory.¹⁴ Later on Cassian notes that the condition of the interior man is often revealed in the behavior of the outer man.¹⁵ Although he alludes to Paul (Eph 3:16-17) in invoking the image of the «interior man», the content that he gives to it is strongly influenced by the Stoic tradition. Following Origen in his exegesis of the command «If anyone strikes you on your

CONCORDIA, *Scritti vari* (Scrittori della Chiesa di Aquileia), ed. M. Simonetti, Aquileia 2000, 262-267.

10 So notes L. Dattrino in: RUFINO, *Storia della chiesa*, ed. L. Dattrino, Roma 1986, 38-40.

11 Cf. A. DE VOGÜÉ, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'antiquité 4. Sulpice Sévère et Pauline de Nole (393-409), Jérôme, homéliste et traducteur des «Pachomiana»*, Paris 1997, 58ff. For example, in the *Vita Martini* 13,8, Martin raises his hand to stop a tree from falling on him as a proof of the true faith against the pagan priests. On the role of miracles in the ancient world, see also R. LATOURELLE, «Miracle», in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 10, Paris 1980, 1274-1286 and H. C. KEE, *Miracle in the Early Christian World. A Study in Sociohistorical Method*, New Haven 1983.

12 For the notion of the inner man, see: A. SOLIGNAC, «Homme intérieur», in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 7, Paris 1969, 650-658 and C. MARKSHIES, «Innere Mensch», in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 18, Stuttgart 1998, 266-312. Jerome uses the term in his Letter 22,6 to Eustochium, one of Cassian's sources.

13 *Inst.* 2.IX.1,3. *Conl. praef.* 1

14 *Inst.* 5.XXI.5.

15 *Inst.* 12.XXIX.2; *Conl.* 7.XV.3.

right cheek, offer him the other as well», Cassian interprets «the other» to indicate the «interior man», not the left cheek.¹⁶ The teaching hidden in the command is «that patience must be observed not by words but by the inner tranquility of heart». The latter phrase (*tranquillitas*) is in fact a Latin Stoic formulation used to render the concept of *apatheia*.¹⁷ Similarly, Cassian insists that only «the strength of our inner man» and not «the recesses of our cell or the remoteness of the desert or the companionship of holy persons or the defense of something that is outside ourselves» can protect our inner peace.¹⁸ Similar formulations, though not directly connected with the image of the inner man, are found elsewhere in Cassian's writings. At the end of Pinufius' homily that concludes the four books of the Institutes proper, he warns «you must not expect your patience to come from anyone else's virtuousness – that is, so that you will only possess it when no one else irritates you (which does not lie in your power to prevent from happening) – but rather from your own humility and forbearance, which depends on your will». ¹⁹ Another formulation of the same principle is found in the context of the treatment of anger:

The sum total of our improvement and tranquillity, then, must not be made to depend on someone else's willing, which will never be subject to our sway; it comes, rather, under our own power. And so our not getting angry must derive not from someone else's perfection but from our own virtue, which is achieved not by another person's patience but by our own forbearance.²⁰

Such formulations reflect the content, if not the letter, of the Stoic concept of *autarkeia* and are related to Cassian's insistence on another Stoic principle, already mentioned, that the only true good is virtue, which in turn entails the concept of the *adiaphora* (indifferent things) elaborated above all in the sixth

16 *Conl.* 16.XXII.2. See ORIGEN, *FragmMt 108* (GCS 41.1.60) and JEROME, *Comm. Matt.* 1.

17 For more extended treatment of this subject, see M. SHERIDAN, «The Controversy over ἀπάθεια», in this volume, 335-363.

18 *Conl.* 18.XVI.1.

19 *Inst.* 4.XLII: *Ergo patientiam tuam non debes de aliorum sperare uirtute, id est ut tunc eam tantummodo possideas, cum a nemine fueris inritatus - quod ut possit non euenire, tuae non subiaceret potestati -, sed potius de humilitate tua et longanimitate, quae in tuo pendet arbitrio.*

20 *Inst.* 8.XVII: *Summa igitur emendationis ac tranquillitatis nostrae non est in alterius arbitrio conlocanda, quod nequaquam nostrae subiaceret potestati, sed in nostra potius ditione consistat. Itaque ut non irascamur, non debet ex alterius perfectione, sed ex nostra uirtute descendere, quae non aliena patientia, sed propria longanimitate conquiritur.*

Conference.²¹ The Christianized version of *autarkeia* presented by Cassian does not imply independence from God and, in referring to another text where Paul uses the phrase «inner man» (Rom 7:22-23), he insists of course on the necessity of grace.²² In any case, the true miracles are those achieved within the inner man as Cassian observes: «indeed it is a greater miracle to tear out the remains of lasciviousness from one's own flesh than to cast out unclean spirits from the bodies of others. It is a more magnificent sign to control fierce movements of anger by the virtue of patience than to command the princes of the air».²³

Cassian makes use of the concept of the «inner man» more than thirty times, from the second book of the Institutes until the last of the Conferences, to keep in focus the real goal of the monastic journey. On this point he never wavers. The goal is not to become an anchorite, although the earlier literary tradition may have left this impression and Cassian may grudgingly concede that this is possible for the perfect few. It is important to keep this in mind to avoid the impression that he changes his mind or that he vacillates, as some have suggested.²⁴

21 For Cassian's debt to the Stoic tradition see M. L. COLISH, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages 1. Stoicism in Classical Latin Literature* (Studies in the History of Christian Thought 34), Leiden 1985. Colish's assertion that Cassian «eschews the psychic autarchy that is the main thrust of Stoic ethics» (p. 116) is insufficiently nuanced. Although Christian authors avoided the vocabulary of *autarkeia*, because it could be interpreted to signify independence of God or divine grace, they made use of the content on a practical level. The inner freedom and independence from external things associated with the concept could be transferred to a Christian context. See P. WILPERT, «Autarkie», in *Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum 1*, Stuttgart 1950, 1039-1050, especially 1045-1048 and also V. WARNACH, «Autarkie, autark», in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie 1*, Darmstadt 1971, 685-690.

22 See, for example, *Conl.* 23.I and XI.

23 *Conl.* 15.VIII: *Et re uera maius miraculum est de propria carne fomitem eradicare luxuria quam expellere imundos spiritus de corporibus alienis, et magnificentius signum est uirtute patientiae truculentos motus iracundiae cohercere quam aëriis principibus imperare, plusque est exclusisse edacissimos de corde proprio tristitiae morsus quam ualitudines alterius febrilesque corporeas expulisse: postremo multis modis praeclarior uirtus sublimiorque profectus est animae propriae curare languores quam corporis alieni. Quanto enim haec sublimior carne est, tanto praestantior eius est salus, quantoque pretiosior excellentiorisque substantiae, tanto grauioris ac perniciosioris est et ruinae.*

24 See P. ROUSSEAU, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian*, Oxford 1978, 182. Rousseau suggests that it is possible to see a development in Cassian's thought, that in the earlier stages he had in mind two distinct groups of people, while later he thought of them rather as two stages in the lives of individuals. C. LEYSER, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great* (Oxford Historical Monographs), Oxford 2000, speaks of «Cassian's ambivalence about cenobitism» (p. 107) and «vacillations» on the subject (p. 118).

But how and where is one to achieve this happy state of the inner man? The extensive monastic literature prior to Cassian had offered anything but a consistent teaching on the subject. Neither the abundance of miracle stories nor the numerous accounts of heroic asceticism offered much help in developing the inner man. Neither what we can reconstruct of early monasticism in fourth century Egypt nor the Latin monastic literature in existence in the early fifth century suggests any uniform institutional tradition. Rather, a great variety of forms of monastic life seem to have existed from the beginning, whenever that may have been. There did indeed exist a rather general tradition about the possibility of progress in the spiritual life, about the need to struggle against the vices in order to arrive at the contemplative life, a tradition that can be followed back through Evagrius, to Origen and Philo, and transmitted above all through the spiritual or allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures.²⁵ But the numerous stories emanating from the Egyptian desert offered no consensus about how the young should be formed or taught this tradition or even about the necessity of finding a spiritual master. The existing Latin monastic literature had not produced greater clarity.

Cassian set about to change this and, as he says in the preface to the *Institutes*, to describe «things that have been left utterly untouched by our predecessors because they tried to describe what they heard rather than what they experienced». This is a sharp criticism of an extensive body of literature. Cassian decided to reshape the existing tradition, if one may call it that, in order to provide authoritative guidance for the spiritual journey and for the formation of the young desiring to set out on this journey. The literary form or forms that he chose for this task, that of a putative monastic travel account, would serve also as an account of and guide to the interior journey.²⁶ The attentive reader, who puts into practice what he reads, will gradually be guided in developing his own inner life. By skillfully combining known elements of the existing monastic literary inheritance with discourses from otherwise unknown but authoritative monks in the Egyptian desert he could shape the tradition to teach his own vision of the spiritual journey and the institutional framework required for it.

25 See M. SHERIDAN, «The Spiritual and Intellectual World of Early Egyptian Monasticism», in this volume, 47-88.

26 The nature and function of the literary form has been well described by S. D. DRIVER, *John Cassian and the Reading of Egyptian Monastic Culture*, New York-London 2002, especially 65ff.

A cardinal point in Cassian's construction of the tradition is the centrality of the cenobium as the place for receiving training for the spiritual journey and, for all practical purposes, the place where one continues the journey indefinitely. In the first authoritative discourse that he inserts into the fourth book of the *Institutes*, that of Pinufius, described as the priest of an immense cenobium, the occasion is the reception of a new brother into the congregation. The homily placed in Pinufius' mouth is in fact a summary of the entire spiritual journey. He is insistent on the need to choose a single spiritual guide within the cenobitic context, asserting that «a person is more carefully schooled and formed for the perfection of this chosen orientation (namely, the cenobitic life) by the example of one».²⁷ By training of this kind, he says, «you will be able, under this discipline, to abide forever, and you will not be drawn away from the cenobium by any trials of the enemy or by any factions».²⁸

To legitimate this basic option for the cenobitic form of monastic life, Cassian invokes even the authority of the great Antony, attributing to him a saying, according to which a monk, after formulating a «*coenobiale propositum*», should not seek all the kinds of virtue from one person, however outstanding he may be, but like the prudent bee must seek spiritual honey from a variety of virtuous flowers.²⁹ His source of course is the *Life of Antony*, where Athanasius describes the ascetic life of the young Antony living on the edge of his village and how he sought to imitate the virtues of other ascetics.³⁰ From all we know

27 *Inst.* 4.XL.

28 *Inst.* 4.XLI.3.

29 *Inst.* 5.IV.1-2. *Vetus namque est beati Antonii admirabilisque sententia, monachum, qui post coenobiale propositum fastigia nititur sublimioris perfectionis adtingere, et adprehenso discretionis examine proprio iam potens est stare iudicio atque ad arcem anachoreseos peruenire, minime debere ab uno quamvis summo uniuersa genera uirtutum expetere. Alius enim scientiae floribus exornatur, alter discretionis ratione robustius communitur, alter patientiae grauitate fundatur, alius humilitatis, alius continentiae uirtute praefertur, alius simplicitatis gratia decoratur, hic magnanimitatis, ille misericordiae, iste uigiliarum, hic taciturnitatis, iste laboris studio superuenit ceteros. 2. Et idcirco monachum spiritalia mella condere cupientem uelut apem prudentissimam debere unamquamque uirtutem ab his qui eam familiarius possident deflorare et in sui pectoris uase diligenter recondere nec quid minus aliquis habeat discutere, sed hoc tantum quid uirtutis possideat contemplari studioseque decerpere - cunctas namque si ab uno uolumus mutuari, aut difficile aut certe numquam idonea ad imitandum nobis exempla poterunt reperiri -, quia, licet necdum Christum omnia factum secundum Apostolum uideamus in omnibus, tamen hoc modo possumus eum, id est per partes in omnibus inuenire. De ipso enim dicitur: Qui factus est nobis ex Deo sapientia, iustitia, sanctitas et redemptio.*

30 *Vit. Ant.*, 3-4

of the historical Antony, however, he never had a «*coenobiale propositum*» and in the Pachomian literature is even made to explain that he would be incapable of living such a life.³¹ Through this subtle interpretation, however, Cassian manages to invoke his authority to insist on his own basic idea that the cenobium is the place where one learns to practice and acquire virtue. In this he is echoing the teaching of Basil rather than the Antony presented by Athanasius.³²

Although Cassian pays lip service to the literary tradition beginning with Athanasius that exalted the solitary life as the summit of monastic perfection,³³ - he could hardly do otherwise with so many authorities ranged on the other side - there is no doubt about his desire to establish the cenobitic life as the principal form of monastic life and the norm for all as regards formation. Recounting how he himself had left the cenobium too early to go to Egypt, he tells how he and Germanus came to the town of Diolcos «and saw there a great throng brought together under the discipline of the cenobium and wonderfully instructed in the best order of monks (*optimo ordine monachorum*), which is also the first». Then he adds that because of «everyone's praises» they were eager to see also that «which is considered still more excellent – namely, that of the anchorites». The description of these that follows seems to place them outside the normal range of the possible, for these «dwelling first for a long time in cenobia, having been carefully and thoroughly instructed in the rule of patience and discretion, having mastered the virtues of humility and poverty and having totally destroyed every vice, penetrate the deep recesses of the desert in order to engage in terrible combat with the demons».³⁴ Cassian is carefully distancing himself from the popular view by stating that it «is considered still more excellent» (*qui excellentior habetur*) and has effectively placed the anchorite life beyond the

31 See the «The Bohairic Life of Pachomius §127», in A. VEILLEUX, *Pachomian Koinonia I*, Kalamazoo, Mich. 1982, 183-184. The Bohairic version is late, but the same idea is found in the «First Greek Life of Pachomius §120». See VEILLEUX, *Pachomian Koinonia I*, 382-383.

32 See BASIL, *Regulae fusius tractatae* 7,4 (PG 31, 933-934).

33 See for example *Inst.* 4.IV: «the pinnacle of the anchorite life».

34 *Inst.* 5.XXXVI.1: *Itaque cum de Palaestinae monasteriis ad oppidum Aegypti, quod Diolcos appellatur, rudes admodum uenisset ibique plurimam turbam coenobii disciplina constrictam et optimo ordine monachorum, qui etiam primus est, institutam mirifice uideremus, alium quoque ordinem, qui excellentior habetur, id est anachoretarum, cunctorum praeconiis instigati sagacissimo corde uidere properauimus. Hi namque in coenobiis primum diutissime commorantes, omnem patientiae ac discretionis regulam diligenter edocti et humilitatis pariter ac nuditatis uirtute possessa atque ad purum uitiorum uniuersitate consumpta, dirrissimis daemonum proeliis congressuri penetrant heremi profunda secreta.*

reach of most, for few will claim to have «destroyed every vice». The cenobium is the proper locus for the acquisition of virtue and in the nineteenth conference he has the Abbot John, who had passed thirty years in the cenobium, twenty as an anchorite and then returned to the cenobium, expound the dangers of the desert and the advantages of the cenobium. John promises to «compress into a few words all the fruits of the solitary life that I have mentioned, showing that they are inferior to the more sublime advantages on the other side» (the cenobitic life).³⁵ He leaves it to his hearers to judge «whether the gains of the desert can be compensated for by these benefits (of the cenobium)».³⁶ Even though he concedes the theoretical superiority of the solitary life (or rather the superiority of a purely contemplative life), the fact is that «human society not only indeed does not hinder the remedies for the vices that we have spoken of previously, but it even contributes a great deal».³⁷ Echoing Basil again, he notes how the provocations to impatience aid in overcoming the vice. He admits that the solitary can engage in spiritual exercises designed to eliminate his impatience, but it is not as easy as for the cenobite. The entire thrust of the conference is designed to bring the reader to the conclusion that it is better to remain in the cenobium.

Not only does Cassian convert the archetypal hermit Antony into a virtual cenobite; he also turns monastic history on its head in seeking to legitimate the cenobitic form of monasticism. The cenobitic «order» is not only the best (*optimo ordine monachorum*); it is also the original (*primus*) form of monasticism. This inversion of history is achieved by insisting on the apostolic origins of monasticism through an adroit combination of the texts describing the life of the Jerusalem community in the Acts of the Apostles with texts found in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*. Cassian states unequivocally that this form of life had been received from the evangelist Mark «who was the first to rule as bishop over the city of Alexandria».³⁸ These first monks in Egypt not only followed all the practices of common life recounted in the Acts (4:32, 34-35), but also took up the ascetic form of life described by Eusebius, who had turned Philo's account of the Therapeutae into a description of an early Christian community. Eusebius held as «probable» that this community used the «Gospels, the writings of the Apostles and some expositions of the prophets after the manner of the an-

35 *Conl.* 19.IV.3.

36 *Conl.* 19.VI.1.

37 *Conl.* 19.XVI.1.

38 *Inst.* 2.V.1; EUSEBIUS, *Hist. eccl.* 2,24.

cients, such as are in the Epistle to the Hebrews and many other of the epistles of Paul». ³⁹ Cassian's mention of the «Church's history» (*ecclesiastica historia*) ⁴⁰ is clearly a reference to the text of Eusebius, which he regards as authoritative.

In the eighteenth conference Cassian offers a more extended version of monastic history, which begins with the discipline of the cenobites taking «its rise at the time of the apostolic preaching» ⁴¹ The texts of Acts 2:45 and 4:34-35 are invoked to support this. As time went on and the fervor of the apostolic age cooled, the more fervent withdrew to rural and secluded places, cut themselves off from the life of the world and were called monks or *monazontes* because of the strictness of their lives. «Consequently they are called cenobites from their common fellowship, and their cells and dwelling places are called cenobia». ⁴² This alone, Cassian states, «was the most ancient kind of monks, which is first not only in time but also in grace, and which remained inviolable throughout the years, up until the era of Abba Paul and Abba Antony». These were the leaders of «another kind of perfection that came out of the discipline that we have spoken of», says Cassian, meaning the cenobitic form. These are called anchorites and they desire to engage the demons in open combat in «the vast recesses of the desert in imitation of John the Baptist». ⁴³ They appear to be very rare and, apart from the mention of Paul and Antony, are described only in terms of scriptural quotations from Hebrews, Job, the Psalms and Jeremiah. Later on there appear deviant forms of monasticism, especially the sarabaites, who «withdrew themselves from the communities of the cenobia and as individuals cared for their own needs». ⁴⁴ Their chief characteristics are that they do not long for the discipline of the cenobia, «they do not submit to the judgment of the elders, nor are they formed in their traditions». ⁴⁵ In other words, they fall outside the authentic tradition and resemble the heretics in the history of the church at large. These kinds of monks, who resemble anchorites, but are not genuine ones, abound and seem to be the most numerous or the only kind in many provinces outside of Egypt. ⁴⁶ In Egypt the genuine and non-genuine are about equally numerous, according to the con-

39 EUSEBIUS, *Hist. eccl.* 2.17,12.

40 *Inst.* 2.V.2.

41 *Conl.* 18.V.1.

42 *Conl.* 18.V.3-4.

43 *Conl.* 18.VI.2

44 *Conl.* 18.VII.2.

45 *Conl.* 18.VII.3.

46 Here he is echoing JEROME, *Epist.* 22, 34.

ference giver, Piamun. This judgment seems to disqualify the vast majority of those who claim to be living the anchoritic life.

It is hard to imagine a more complete legitimation of the cenobitic life. To appreciate how Cassian has shaped the tradition, a brief comparison with one of his sources may be instructive. There seems little doubt that he was conversant with Jerome's famous letter 22, written perhaps as much as forty years earlier, where Jerome had introduced the theme of the different kinds of monks. The first line, in fact, is identical in the case of both Jerome and Cassian: *tria sunt in Aegypto genera monachorum*. Jerome's material about Egyptian monasticism, obtained perhaps from Praesidius,⁴⁷ already shows the influence of cenobitic circles, probably Pachomian ones, in Egypt.⁴⁸ There are, says Jerome, three kinds (*genera*) of monks, the *cenobium*, a word that Jerome is here introducing into Latin and which he explains as «those who live in a community», the anchorites, «who live alone in the desert, are called by this name because they have withdrawn from society», and the third kind are called *remnuoth*, «the only ones or the principal kind found in our province».⁴⁹ After a brief satirical description of the third kind, Jerome includes a lengthy description of the daily life of the cenobites and finally a brief description of the anchorites, who, he says, «have gone forth from the cenobia and take nothing with them to the desert except bread and salt».⁵⁰ At the end of his description of the cenobites, Jerome had added that the Essenes, as described by Philo and Josephus, had also lived in this way, but he makes no historical connection with them. The anchorites are said to have been founded by Paul (of Thebes),⁵¹ made illustrious by Antony,

47 Cf. A. DE VOGÜÉ, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'Antiquité 1. Le monachisme latin de la mort d'Antoine à la fin du séjour de Jérôme à Rome (356-385)* (Patrimoine christianisme), Paris 1991, 216, 288.

48 VOGÜÉ, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'Antiquité 1*, 294-295.

49 Malcolm Choat has recently argued convincingly that neither the description of Jerome nor that of Cassian can be used as sources for knowledge of Egyptian monasticism in this period. See M. CHOAT, «The Development and Usage of Terms for "Monk" in Late Antique Egypt», *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 45 (2002) 5-23, and «Philological and Historical Approaches to the Search for the "Third Type" of Egyptian Monk», in *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of A New Millennium 2. Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies, Leiden, 27 August - 2 September 2000*, ed. M. Immerzeel - J. van der Vliet (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 133), Leuven/Paris 2004, 857-865.

50 JEROME, *Epist.* 22,34-36.

51 Jerome's first literary work was the *Vita Pauli*, also the first monastic work written in latin, though not the first to appear in Latin. See VOGÜÉ, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'Antiquité 1*, 150ff.

but the first to live this way in earlier times was John the Baptist. A prophetic description of such a type is added from Jeremiah.⁵²

In dealing with this material, which had already been used by Sulpicius Severus⁵³ and the author of the *Consultationes* of Zachaeus,⁵⁴ Cassian introduces significant changes. The cenobites, to whom Jerome had attributed no founder, are given, as we have seen, a historical lineage, and a tradition going back to the Apostles both in Jerusalem and in Egypt. The community described by Philo, merely a curious comparison in Jerome's version, becomes with the help of Eusebius, the first cenobitic monastic community in Egypt. Their usages or institutes, however, are relegated by Cassian to the first four books of the *Institutes*, which describe the «outer man». The anchorites are described as sprouting forth «from this number of the perfect», that is, the cenobites. The addition of the phrase *de hoc perfectorum numero* to describe the cenobites is important, because, as we have noted, Cassian has insisted from the beginning that only the perfect, fully formed in the cenobium, may become anchorites. He retains here the mention of Paul and Antony; however, they are not *auctores*, but rather *principes*, the first to take up this profession, not because of pusillanimity or impatience, but because of a desire for higher progress and contemplation. In this way he again manages to cast doubt on the motivation of the majority of anchorites as he then does directly for Jerome's creation, Paul of Thebes, who, he says, «is said to have penetrated the desert out of need, in order to escape the snares of his relatives during a time of persecution».⁵⁵ Cassian retains the idea that the anchorites imitate John the Baptist as well as the descriptive quotation from Jeremiah, but adds other biblical references to Elijah, Elisha, Job and the Psalms. The end result is to strengthen the legitimation of the cenobites as the original form of monasticism and the unique source of all authentic monasticism. The tradition thus produced exists only in the west and of course bears no resemblance to the real history of the monastic movement as we know it from

52 Lam 3:27-30.

53 Sulpicius Severus, *Dial.* 1,1-10; cf. VOGÜÉ, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'antiquité* 4, 103ff.

54 *Consultationes Zachaei* III, 3,4-20; A. DE VOGÜÉ, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique* 5. *De l'épître de sainte Paule à la consécration de Démétride (404-414)*, Paris 1998, 133ff. Vogüé suggests it was written about 408-410 (p. 126). For the text, see: *Questions d'un païen à un chrétien (Consultationes Zacchei christiani et Apollonii philosophi)* (SCh 401), ed. J.-L. Feiertag, Paris 1994.

55 *Conl.* 18.VI.1.

other sources. In effect, the propaganda originally produced in the Pachomian circles in Egypt has triumphed in the west.

The monastic life then is about the interior life, the inner man, and the place where this development may most easily be realized is the cenobium, but Cassian's creation of authoritative tradition is hardly limited to these points. The tradition that he passes on includes also many aspects of the life of the outer man including his clothing, his diet, and the number of psalms to be recited at different times. The rule of the Egyptians and «some of those of the Tabennesiotes» are invoked to insist on perseverance in the cenobium, and practices of obedience, poverty, and manual labor.⁵⁶ In Egypt and the Thebaid, Cassian insists, «monasteries are not established at the whim of a single renunciant but remain through a succession of elders and their traditions even to the present day».⁵⁷ The similarity to the apostolic succession is obvious. In order to insist on the necessity of manual labor he appeals to the tradition handed on by Paul (2 Thes 3:6), thus associating the monastic tradition of work directly with the authority of the apostle.⁵⁸ Elsewhere the tradition invoked is more vague. The causes of the passions are said to have been exposed by «the teachings of the elders»⁵⁹ and, as for «fasting and the quality of food» in the struggle against *gastrimargia*, «we have recourse once more to the traditions and laws of the Egyptians».⁶⁰ In the final book of the tract on the vices Cassian says that it is time «to produce an opinion of the fathers in the very words in which they handed it down» (*ipsis quibus tradunt verbis patrum*). The opinion turns out to be the necessity of recognizing that perfection cannot be attained «apart from the compassion and help of God».⁶¹ At the same time, he insists that «It is in accordance with their traditions and instructions (*traditiones et institutiones*), therefore, that we must strive after it and give ourselves over to fasting, prayer, and contrition of heart and body».⁶² A matter of tradition also is the method of prayer centered on the use of the single opening verse of Psalm 70:1 «O God, incline to my aid ... ». It must be transmitted (*tradunda vobis*) «to

56 *Inst.* 4.1.

57 *Inst.* 2.III.1.

58 *Inst.* 10.VII-IX.

59 *Inst.* 5.II.1.

60 *Inst.* 5.III.1.

61 *Inst.* 12.XIII.

62 *Inst.* 12.XVI.

you» in the same way that children are taught the letters of the alphabet, that is, by tradition.⁶³

Sometimes the tradition of the fathers is associated with Scripture as in the case of the stages of renunciation, which are said to be shown to be three by «the tradition of the fathers and the authority of Holy Scriptures».⁶⁴ On one occasion the teaching offered about the diversity among the «principalities» or spiritual beings, which in fact can be traced to Origen, is said to come from «the traditions of the fathers, which derives from Holy Scripture».⁶⁵ The «tradition» concerning the celebration of the ten days between the Ascension and Pentecost has been «transmitted to us by apostolic men and is to be kept in the same manner». Presumably this is an anachronistic reading of the liturgical tradition back into the apostolic period. In short, Cassian presents everything in these works as tradition, whether it comes from the Tabennesiotes, Evagrius, Origen, or Stoic philosophy. Much of the time the tradition is reinforced with or associated with quotations from Scripture. In reality, however, it is a highly original synthesis, as Cassian was aware and had hinted in the preface to the Institutes when he promised to treat «things left utterly untouched by our predecessors».

The tradition thus created is obviously meant to be authoritative. The word «authority» in Cassian's works attaches above all to Scripture. Thus abba Sereenus states: «The authority of the divine Scriptures has said some things so lucidly and clearly for our instruction, even to those of limited intelligence, that not only are they not veiled in the obscurity of a hidden meaning but they do not even need to be explained. ...».⁶⁶ The authority of Scripture includes sayings attributed directly to the Lord as, for example, the teaching about prayer.⁶⁷ It attaches also to the teachings of the Apostle Paul, who is sometimes said to base himself on the authority of the Lord.⁶⁸ Sometimes the authority of Scripture is invoked to confirm what has already been established by argumentation or by tradition. Thus the «subsequent authority of Scripture» will confirm the teaching of Theonas about fasting, that it is not a good in itself like the good of

63 *Conl.* 10.X.

64 *Conl.* 3.VI.1.

65 *Conl.* 8.VI.

66 *Conl.* 8.III.

67 *Conl.* 9.25.1.

68 *Inst.* 10.VIII.2; *Conl.* 15.II.2; *Conl.* 9.XXV.

virtue.⁶⁹ And occasionally the authority of Scripture invoked is negative: there is nothing in Scripture to justify a permanent fast.⁷⁰

Authority also attaches to the «fathers» who represent the unbroken tradition that putatively goes back to the apostolic age.⁷¹ It also belongs to those in the recent past whose teaching is being recounted by Cassian, if their teaching corresponds to what they have practiced. The virtue of the teacher guarantees the authority. Early on in the *Institutes* he states that «we may confirm with the most irrefutable testimonies, as it were, what is set forth in our exposition, backing up everything that we have spoken of by their example and by the authority of their lives».⁷² Later he has Chaeremon state: «For the authority of the instructor will be valueless unless he has fastened it in his hearer's heart by what he has himself achieved».⁷³ Mentioning Pinufius again in Conference 20, he explains the need to describe his virtue again by saying that «all of the authority of the speaker's words will be lost if his virtuousness goes unmentioned».⁷⁴

Finally the lack of such a correspondence between life and teaching is a motive for denying authority to some who may claim it. In the second conference on discretion, Cassian raises the question of those who may claim authority merely on the basis of their age and grey hairs. These, «who claim authority for themselves based not on their mature behavior but on their many years», unfortunately seem to be in the majority. The answer is unequivocal: «we should follow those who we recognize have shaped their lives in a praiseworthy and upright manner as young men, and who have been instructed not in their own presumptions, but in the traditions of their forebears».⁷⁵

Given the fact that the majority does not seem to fall into this category, one may ask where then is one to find an authoritative guide. The answer is in the works produced by Cassian, which faithfully reproduce the authentic tradition. It is these texts themselves that Cassian intended to function as an authority, perhaps as the most important authority in the monastic society of his day.⁷⁶

69 *Conl.* 21.XII.1-4.

70 *Conl.* 21.XIV.2.

71 *Conl.* 21.XII.1.

72 *Inst.* 4.XV.2.

73 *Conl.* 11.IV.3.

74 *Conl.* 20.I.1. See also *Conl.* 2.XI.6: «just as their tradition and upright life inform us».

75 *Conl.* 2.XIII.2.

76 Rousseau suggests that «This emphasis on principles, on techniques that had little reference to the personalities involved, shows how the discipline of the spiritual life had come

They could serve as an antidote or escape from the abuse of power by those whose lives do not merit the authority to which they lay claim. They could also function as a re-enforcement to monastic authorities by providing content and an authoritative tradition or as a direct authority, as spiritual exercises that could, as Cassian suggests, enter the anchorite's cell and dialogue with him. In the preface to the second set of conferences, which Cassian dedicates to Honoratus, «who presides over a large cenobium of brothers», Cassian expresses the hope that they may serve to add «authority among his sons». Presumably Honoratus, who is said to desire that his community be «instructed in the precepts of these fathers», will be able to use their content for instruction and be able to teach authoritatively because of them. At the very end of the third volume of conferences, in a postscript, Cassian addresses his readers directly, that is, those to whom he dedicated the work in the third preface, and says: «This is, rather, for the purpose of increasing your authority among your sons, if the precepts of the greatest and most ancient fathers confirm what you yourselves teach by your living example, not by the dead sound of words».⁷⁷ The greatest authority is attached to living example, but that cannot always be found. If such is the case, there remain the conferences, which, like their authors, may be received into the cells of the monks to instruct them.⁷⁸ There is thus constituted, as Prof. Leyser has felicitously noted «an ascetic community in the present, wherever they might be – a *coenobium* of letters».⁷⁹

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Cassian set out to create an authoritative tradition for Latin monasticism by attributing nothing to himself and everything to otherwise unknown but great spiritual fathers. He is the transmitter of the tradition, which he learned in Egypt and which he can verify by personal experience. He invites the reader to

to depend less on the insight and authority of holy men, and more on a sense of corporate tradition, custom, and experience» (ROUSSEAU, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian*, 198. One may wonder whether this «insight and authority of holy men» was not part of a legendary or mythic past. Cassian was certainly proposing a less haphazard authority.

77 *Conl.* 24.XVI.19.

78 *Conl. praef.* 3. Cassian in effect praises his own work saying that «these conferences of the greatest fathers were so carefully composed and are so balanced in all respects that they are appropriate to both professions» (cenobites and anchorites).

79 LEYSER, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great*, 59.

follow the same spiritual journey by putting into practice what he reads. Cassian's literary productions, however, were subtle, sophisticated and probably beyond the philosophical and theological level of most monks either of his time or of the succeeding centuries.⁸⁰ It was another much shorter and simpler work, the Rule of Benedict, which, largely through the efforts of Benedict of Aniane in the ninth century, was to become the principal authoritative text for monastic circles in the Middle Ages. And it is surely one of the ironies of literary history that this small work, hardly to be compared with Cassian's masterpiece as far as content is concerned and itself in part derivative from Cassian's work, should end up by conferring authority on Cassian's own writings. At the end of the Rule of Benedict, after recommending the Old and New Testament and the books of the holy catholic fathers to those who wish to make further progress, the author adds: «Then, besides the Conferences of the fathers, their Institutes and their Lives, there is also the rule of our holy father Basil».⁸¹ The fact that Cassian's name is omitted is paradoxically a testimony to his achievement in conferring authority on his work, in producing an authoritative text. Yet, with his emphasis on the cenobitic life as the proper locus for the development of the interior life, Cassian (unwittingly?) laid the foundation for a form of authority legitimated not so much by virtuous life but by law and divine authority. The abbot in the Rule of Benedict takes the place of Christ, a very heavy legitimation indeed.⁸² And, notwithstanding all of its moderation in comparison with its predecessor and source, the Rule of the Master, the Rule of Benedict is marked by an exercise of power in which social controls aimed at external conformity play a much greater role than the development of Cassian's «interior man».⁸³ Although there is no institutional figure comparable to the abbot of Benedict's Rule to be found in the works of Cassian, Cassian's

80 See O. CHADWICK, *The Making of the Benedictine Ideal* (The Thomas Verner Moore Memorial Lecture for 1980), Washington 1981, who notes that Cassian «may have thought that he wrote for all monks, but the people who understood him were highly educated monks. He was a man for leaders» (p. 5).

81 *Regula Benedicti* 73,5. Eng. tr.: RB 1980. *The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English with Notes*, ed. T. Fry et al., Collegeville 1981, 297.

82 The notion of the abbot as *vices Christi* (RB 2,2) is of course taken over from the Rule of the Master (2,2). See A. DE VOGÜÉ, *La Règle de Saint Benoît* (SC 181), Paris 1972, 441.

83 It may not be out of place to recall the wise observation of Heinrich Bacht regarding the dangers of confusing the institutional figure of abbot with that of the charismatic «abba» depicted by Cassian, a confusion, which, as Bacht notes, has led to many catastrophes in the history of Christian monasticism. See H. BACHT, *Das Vermächtnis des Ursprungs: Studien zum frühen Mönchtum I*, Würzburg 1972, 216.

insistent legitimation of the cenobitic form of life provided the indispensable foundation for the development of this figure in the Rules of the Master and of Benedict. For this reason he must be counted as an indirect founder of medieval abbatial authority.

JOHN CASSIAN¹

John Cassian, the principal western exponent of the monastic tradition in the fifth century, is the author of three works: the *Institutes* (*Institutiones*), the *Conferences* (*Conlationes*) and the *Concerning the Incarnation of the Lord Against Nestorius* (*De incarnatione Domini contra Nestorium*).²

Life: the details of Cassian's life that we know with precision and certainty are few. According to the indications furnished by Gennadius (*Vir. ill.* LXI), he was born about 360 AD in Scythia Minor (Dobrugia) in a well to do family (in Provence according to Cappuyns and some other modern authors),³ and received a good classical Latin education (*Conl.* 14.XII), but other indications in his works (the introduction of Greek vocabulary and the use of sources available only in Greek such as the works of Evagrius Ponticus) as well as the facility with which he moved about in the East suggest an excellent knowledge of Greek.

Around 378-360, while he was still young (*Inst., praef.* 4: «pueritia nostra»), he entered, together with his friend Germanus, a monastery (otherwise unknown) in Bethlehem (*Conl.* 1.I; 14.V). There, inspired by contact with a famous Egyptian monk named Pinufius, the Abbot and priest of a large monastery near Panephytis (in the Nile Delta), who, fleeing from his own fame, had been received into the monastery at Bethlehem as a novice (*Conl.* 20.I-

1 The present article is a translation of «Cassiano Giovanni», in *Letteratura Patristica*, ed. A. di Berardino - G. Fedalto - M. Simonetti, Milano 2007, 250-256. The English quotations are from JOHN CASSIAN, *The Institutes* (ACW 58), tr. B. Ramsey, New York 2000, and JOHN CASSIAN, *The Conferences* (ACW 57), tr. B. Ramsey, New York 1997.

2 For the Latin text, the critical edition of the works of Cassian is: JOHANNES CASSIANUS, *De Institutis Coenobiorum et de Octo Principalium Vitiolorum Remediis*, ed. M. Petschenig (CSEL 17), Vienna 1888 and JOHANNES CASSIANUS, *Conlationes*, ed. M. Petschenig (CSEL 13), Vindobonae 1886. A slightly revised Latin text may also be found in JEAN CASSIEN, *Institutions cénobitiques*, ed. J.-C. Guy (SCh 109), Paris 1965 and JEAN CASSIEN, *Conférences*, ed. E. Pichery (SCh 42, 54, 64), Paris 1955-59. The Latin text is found also in Migne: PL 49, 53-476; 477-1321; PL 50, 9-270. The text in Migne is accompanied by the 17th century commentary of Alardus Gazaeus, which, although outdated by modern research, is still of historical interest.

3 H.-I. MARROU, «La patrie de Jean Cassien», in *Patristique et Humanisme*, Paris 1976, 345-361.

II), they obtained permission to go to Egypt (*Conl.* 17.V) to visit the famous monks. It is not possible to determine with precision how many years they spent in Egypt, probably between ten and twenty. Cassian indicates (*Conl.* 17.XXX) that after seven years they returned to the monastery in Bethlehem to obtain permission to remain in Egypt. At the beginning they went to the monastery of Archebius at Panephrisis in the Nile delta with the intention of going as far as the desert of the Thebaid «to visit many of the holy ones, whose reputation had made them glorious everywhere» (*Conl.* 11.I). Although Cassian described the customs of the monks of Tabennesi (*Inst.* 4.I; *Conl.* 20.I-II), it may be doubted whether they ever reached the Thebaid. He could have made use of literary sources (the translations made by Jerome of Pachomian documents or the Greek versions of the same). According to the indications given in the first volume of the *Conferences*, the longest stay of their Egyptian period would have been at Scetis (*Conl.* 1.I: «*Cum in heremo Sciti*»; *Conl.* 10.II), although the sixth Conference is located at the Cells, a place rather far from Scetis (*octoginta milium*, *Conl.* 6.I).

The only information furnished by Cassian that permits a precise dating is the mention of the Festal Letter of Theophilus (399), the bishop of Alexandria, against the anthropomorphites (*Conl.* 10.II). The violent religious clashes that followed the Letter and the accusations of «Origenism» launched by Theophilus in his letter of 400, together with the persecution of the «tall brothers» would have constrained Cassian and Germanus together with many other monks to leave Egypt. After that he is found at Constantinople, where he was ordained deacon by John Chrysostom (GENNADIUS, *Vir. ill.* LXII). In the aftermath of the deposition and exile of the latter, instigated by Theophilus, the friends of Chrysostom entrusted a letter for Innocent, the bishop of Rome, to Cassian and Germanus (PALLADIUS, *Dialog.* III,3). At Rome he would have become acquainted with the Archdeacon Leo, the future bishop of Rome, whom he addressed in the Preface of his *De Incarnatione*. Where he spent the following years is unknown, but around 415 he was in Marseille, where he was ordained priest (GENNADIUS, *Vir. ill.* LXII), and where he founded two monasteries, St. Victor for men and St. Savior for women. There also in the years 420-428, in response to the request of bishops in southern Gaul, he wrote the two works, the *Institutes* and the *Conferences*, in order to transmit to the West the authentic tradition of Eastern monasticism (above all that of Egypt). Toward the end of his life, in answer to the request of Leo, he wrote a polemical and doctrinal work, the *De incarnatione Domini contra Nestorium*. According to Gennadius, Cassian died while Theodosius II (†450)

e Valentinian (†455) were reigning as emperors, but it is commonly supposed that he was already dead around 435.

The works: literary genre and purpose. The various prefaces to the *Institutes* and the *Conferences* are particularly important for understanding the literary genre and the structure of Cassian's two principal works. In the longer and more elaborate one placed at the beginning of the *Institutes*, after the dedication to «Pope» Castor of Apt (bishop 419-426), Cassian compares himself to the architect Hiram (1 Kgs 7:13-14), called to help with the construction of a spiritual temple. He insists on the importance of experience, which earlier writers about the monastic life had not possessed, and declares his intention to omit all talk of marvels and miracles, which contribute nothing to education about perfection of life. Instead he will seek to illustrate the «institutes of these men and the rules of their monasteries and, in particular, the origins and causes and remedies of the principal vices, which they number as eight, according to their traditions» (*Inst. praef.* 7). The omission of marvels and miracles (repeated several times: *Conl.* 15.VII-VIII; 18.I,III) is unusual among ancient monastic authors (in Athanasius, Jerome, Rufinus, Sulpicius Severus they are found in abundance), where the miracles often serve to give authority to writings or to attest the sanctity of the monastic heroes. Cassian even omits miraculous elements from traditional accounts (*Inst.* 4.XXIV.4 – the dry stick, which in Cassian's version does not flower at the end of the story). Instead the authority of the teaching found in the *Institutes* and the *Conferences* (always attributed to elderly otherwise unknown Egyptian monks) derives from the authority of the «tradition» that they represent. To legitimate this concept of tradition, Cassian turns history upside down so as to locate monasticism already in the apostolic era by using the accounts of the primitive Christian community in the Acts 4:32-35 and the description of the first community in Egypt taken from Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 2,17), who had taken it from Philo (*Contempl.*). To justify a basic element of this «tradition», the necessity of receiving a cenobitical formation before living as a hermit, Cassian attributes even to the archetypical hermit Antony a «cenobitical intention» (*Inst.* 5.IV).

To give authority to the «tradition» that he is creating, Cassian sought to hide his own personality and to present himself as a mere channel of the tradition.⁴ That this attempt was successful can be seen from the citation of

4 For more extensive discussion of this theme, see the preceding essay, «John Cassian and the formation of authoritative tradition», 409-426.

his works at the end of the Rule of St. Benedict (ch. 73) as the «Conferences» and the «Institutes» of the «fathers», without mention of the author. Often the works of Cassian have been treated as a historical source for knowledge of Egyptian monasticism. There are, however, indications that Cassian was aware of the originality of his works: the comparison with the architect of Salomon's temple, the difficulty mentioned that «we can no longer remember completely the things we tried to do or learned» because «many years have gone by since we left their company» (*Inst. praef.* 4), and the assertion that he will expound «things that have been left utterly untouched by our predecessors, because they tried to describe what they heard rather than what they experienced ...» (*Inst. praef.* 7).

To interpret correctly the works of Cassian, it is essential to keep in mind his pedagogical intention, which also determines the organization of the subject matter as the account of a spiritual journey. In the preface he also mentions the necessity of discussing and developing spiritual knowledge «by frequent conferences with spiritual men». Otherwise «they quickly slip back into oblivion due to mental neglect» (*Inst. praef.* 5). The pedagogical intention of producing a whole series of spiritual exercises designed to introduce the beginner into the interior life becomes clearer, when one notes in the second Conference the negative opinion regarding the possibility of finding spiritual guides: «For there are some - and, mores the pity, they are the majority - who have grown old in the lukewarmness and idleness that they learned in their youth and who claim authority for themselves based not on their mature behavior but on their many years» (*Conl.* 2.XIII.2), and the hope expressed in the preface to the last volume of the Conferences that the monks «already practiced in and occupied with these exercises» will receive «the very authors of the conferences into their cells, along with the books of the conferences, and as it were speaking with them by way of daily questions and answers». For this reason it is risky to use these works as sources for the reconstruction of Egyptian monasticism in the fourth century. The monastic works of Cassian are neither archives for the reconstruction of history nor systematic treatises on the spiritual life, but rather spiritual exercises in the form of dialogues.

The *Institutes* (*Institutiones*), which in the manuscripts do not have a title, are divided into two parts, as indicated in the quotation above from the preface (*Inst. praef.* 7). The first four books are dedicated to the exterior man (2.IX.1), a key concept for Cassian, the contrary of the «interior man» (*Inst.* 5.XXI.5; 12.XXIX.2; *Conl.* 7.XV.3; 9.XXI.2; 16.XXII.2; 18.XVI.1), an idea derived explicitly from Paul (Eph 3:16-17). The «exterior man» refers in this case to

the customs of the Egyptian monks, e.g. the monastic habit, the organization of the canonical hours of prayer, etc., and these four books conclude with a long homily of Abba Pinufius addressed to a young novice, which contains an important summary of the monastic journey based on the cross of Christ. The last eight books are dedicated to an analysis of the eight principal vices and to their elimination: gluttony (5), fornication (6), filargyria (love of money) (7), anger (8), sadness (9), acedia (10), cenodoxia (vainglory) (11), pride (12), which are understood as obstacles to the development of the contemplative life. In the preceding literature this precise list is found only in the works of Evagrius of Pontus, who was an important source for Cassian. Evagrius (never mentioned explicitly by Cassian perhaps because of the accusations brought against Evagrius by Jerome in Letter 133) is the source (*Prakticus*, *prol.*) also for the description and the symbolism of the monastic habit in the first book of the *Institutes*. The detailed analysis by Vogüé has shown that Cassian availed himself of information drawn from several other literary sources including Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, Jerome, Basil, Eusebius, and Palladius.⁵

To connect the *Conferences*, already announced in the *Institutes* (*Inst.* 2.IX.1), to the preceding work, Cassian introduced (*Conl. praef.* 1) the figure of Jacob, who struggles against the carnal vices in order to merit the name of Israel, which symbolizes the contemplative life, an interpretation which goes back to Philo of Alexandria, but which is found also in Origen and Ambrose.⁶ The *Conferences* were published in three volumes of ten, seven, and seven conferences respectively. The first volume is dedicated to Leontius, bishop of Fréjus and brother of Castor (to whom the *Institutes* had been dedicated), and to the hermit Helladius, the second volume to Honoratus and Eucherius of Lerins, the third to four monks of the Stoechadian islands, Jovianus, Minervus, Leontius, and Theodore. In the preface to the third volume Cassian compares the 24 conferences to the elders of the Apocalypse, who will be able to enter the cells of the monks to converse with them. This idea is to be understood in connection with the observation already quoted from the preface to the *Institutes* regarding the need of «frequent conferences with spiritual men» in order to safeguard spiritual knowledge (*Inst. praef.* 5). Each confer-

5 A. DE VOGÜÉ, «Les sources des quatre premiers livres des Institutions de Jean Cassien. Introduction aux recherches sur les anciennes règles monastiques latines», *Studia Monastica* 27 (1985) 241-311.

6 For a fuller explanation, see the essay «Jacob and Israel: A Contribution to the History of an Interpretation», in this volume, 315-334.

ence is devoted to one subject, for example, the distinction between the goal (*scopos*) and the end of the spiritual life (*Conl.* 1), discretion (*Conl.* 2), the one true good of the soul or the «indifferent things» (*Conl.* 6), prayer (*Conl.* 9-10), the contemplative life or the correct method of interpreting Scripture (*Conl.* 14), friendship (*Conl.* 16, sinlessness or the sins of the perfect (*Conl.* 23). Certain subjects were traditional in the philosophic and Christian tradition, while others reflect the controversies of the period, above all Pelagianism (e.g. *Conl.* 6; 13; 23) in which Cassian had taken a position against Pelagius but different from that of Augustine and Jerome. The principal interest of Cassian always remains the development of the interior man (*homo interior*, *Conl.* 16.XXII.2). With an elegant style (Gennadius: *litterato sermone*) and a rich technical terminology that indicates a knowledge of the Greek authors as well as the Latin classical and Christian ones, Cassian produced a new synthesis of the tradition, which corresponds to his intention expressed at the beginning (*Inst. praef.* 7) to expound «things that have been left utterly untouched by our predecessors». Hiding himself behind the facade of famous (but otherwise unknown) Egyptian monks he succeeded in establishing the idea of a normative monastic tradition going back to the time of the apostles in Egypt with more recent developments (Antony and the anchoritic form of monasticism).

In his last work, *De incarnatione Domini contra Nestorium libri VII*, Cassian, responding to the request of Leo (the future bishop of Rome), sought to combat the heresy of Nestorius (bishop of Constantinople), calling to his aid a whole series of both Western and Eastern authors: Hilary, Ambrose, Jerome, Rufinus, Augustine, Gregory Nazianzen, Athanasius, and John Chrysostom. Nestorius seems to be still bishop of Constantinople when the work was written, which suggests a date before August 430, when he was deposed. The treatise *Against Nestorius* does not open new perspectives in the development of Christology and was not cited by the Council of Ephesus (431), but was used by Leo in the construction of his *Tome* to Flavian, where the collection of patristic texts made by Cassian is found in the second part of the letter. Thus it indirectly influenced the Council of Chalcedon (451).

Content and Teaching: As already noted, Cassian was interested above all in the development of the interior life, which includes two parts or aspects, the «practical» (from the Greek *praktichē*) or «actual» life (*vita actualis*) and the contemplative life (Greek: *theoretichē*, *Conl.* 14.I). The practical life or knowledge is possible without the contemplative life, but not the contrary. The goal of the practical life consists in coming to know the nature of all the

vices and the method best suited for healing them. A second aspect of the practical life is «discerning of the sequence of the virtues and forming our mind by their perfection in such a way that it is obedient to them not as if it were coerced and subjected to an arbitrary rule but as taking pleasure in and enjoying what is to say a natural good, thus mounting with delight the hard and narrow way» (*Conl.* 14.III). Cassian thus shows a clear understanding of the classical concept of virtue. The last eight books of the *Institutiones* offer a detailed analysis of the symptoms of each vice (*vitium*), often with humor, sometimes employing the literary form of satire (*Inst.* 10.II; 11.XVI; 12.XX-VII), and offering suggestions for combating them. The schema of the eight principal vices, frequently also called «thoughts» (*cogitationes*) and identified with the *dialogismoi* of Matt 15:19 (*Inst.* 6.II), is clearly derived from Evagrius of Pontus,⁷ but the idea of struggling against the thoughts (Greek: *logismoi*) is much older and is found already in Philo of Alexandria's interpretation of the figure of Jacob. The vices are also described as «passions» (*passiones*) and «disordered movements» (*perturbationes*), this last expression having been introduced into the Latin vocabulary by Cicero to render the Greek word *pathē*.

The aim of the practical life is to achieve purity of heart, identified also with «the perfection of apostolic love» (*Inst.* 4.XLIII). Cassian avoids the technical Greek term *apatheia* used by Evagrius of Pontus as the equivalent of purity of heart, although he introduced many other technical Greek terms into his works, perhaps because of the confusion and controversy caused by Jerome (*Epist.* 133,3) and Augustine (*Civ.* 14,9,4), who had both polemicized against the word. But the concept was too important, indeed essential, to abandon it and Cassian dedicated considerable attention to explaining the difference between the goal (Greek: *skopos*) and the end (Greek: *telos*) of the spiritual life in the first conference. The goal is identified with purity of heart (*Conl.* 1.V) using Phil 3:13-14 cited in Greek (κατὰ σκοπὸν) and the end is identified with the kingdom of God, which in turn is identified with contemplation by means of Luke 17:20-21 e Rom 14:17. Actually it was not necessary to introduce the term *apatheia* in Latin because, in addition to the biblical phrase «purity of heart» (Matt 5:8), there existed already in the Latin philosophical tradition

7 For Cassian's debt to Evagrius of Pontus, see especially the pioneering work of S. MAR-SILI, *Giovanni Cassiano ed Evagrio Pontico. Dottrina sulla carità e contemplazione* (SA 5), Roma 1936.

an equivalent vocabulary: *tranquillitas mentis*, *immobilitas*, *constantia*, *equilibrium*, etc., amply employed by Cassian.⁸

In the sixth conference dedicated nominally to the question of the death of the saints, but in reality to the concept of the «indifferent» things (*media*), a traditional Stoic idea, Cassian returns to the idea of *apatheia* in a different context. The Stoic idea is that death is not an evil in an absolute sense. Only vice, which destroys the soul morally, is a true evil and virtue is the only true good of the soul. The conference represents an indirect response to the position of Jerome and Augustine, who had interpreted the idea of *apatheia* as a lack of emotional capacity (*anesthesia* in Greek and *stupor* in Latin) and as equivalent to the Pelagian position of a state in which it is no longer possible to sin, called *inpeccantia* by Jerome. Cassian uses the traditional Latin philosophical terminology together with biblical examples to present the Stoic ideal of the sage in fully Christian dress, employing many elements already used by Jerome and Augustine, but arranging them differently. The ideal is symbolized by the ambidextrous man (Jdg 3:15; the word «ambidextrous» had already been coined by Jerome in Latin) realized above all by Job and Paul, models of *tranquillitas*, *immobilitas*, *e constantia*.⁹ For Cassian the equivalence between *apatheia* and *inpeccantia* is obviously unacceptable and in Conference 23 he sets out a position on the question of *inpeccantia* against the Pelagians, but different from that of Jerome and Augustine, which reflects more the tradition stemming from Origen, insisting nevertheless on the impossibility of arriving at a state in this life in which it is no longer possible to sin.

With Conferences 9 and 10 dedicated to prayer, the basic course (first volume) in monastic spirituality concludes. In addition to many traditional elements, including a commentary on the Lord's prayer, of special interest is the part devoted to the «little method», which makes use of the psalm verse «God, come to my assistance», etc. (Psalm 69:2; *Conl.* 10.X-XIV) to arrive at the prayer without words and without images, the so-called «fiery» prayer, which reflects the teaching of Evagrius of Pontus. In this context Cassian refers also to the anthropomorphist controversy of the year 399 (*Conl.* 10.III).

From the preface to the second volume of the Conferences, it is clear that Cassian conceived the second and third volumes together as a supplement to

8 For a more extensive treatment of this subject, see the essay «The Controversy over *ἀπάθεια*: Cassian's sources and his use of them», in this volume, 335-363.

9 For more extensive development of this subject, see the essay «Job and Paul. Philosophy and Exegesis in Cassian's Sixth Conference», in this volume, 365-390.

the first two volumes already published (the *Institutes* and the first volume of the *Conferences*) to complete that which was «obscure or omitted». The geographical context of the second volume is indicated imprecisely as «another desert» (*in alia heremo*). Certain modern authors have concluded that Cassian did not have the intention originally to write 24 conferences and that meanwhile he had changed certain of his ideas, above all in regard to the question of the relationship between the cenobitic and the anchoritic forms of monastic life. This hypothesis is not necessary if one keeps in mind his pedagogical method, which involves treating a subject more than once, and that his interest is above all in the development of the interior life.

In the second volume are found the more controversial writings of Cassian, Conference 13 on the «God's protection» (actually on the subject of grace and free will) and Conference 17 «on making promises», where Cassian took a position different from that of Augustine.¹⁰ The second volume also contains the important fourteenth Conference dedicated to spiritual knowledge where the correct method for interpreting the Scriptures is explained, one of the principal sources for medieval Latin exegesis. Here for the first time in Latin is found the distinction of the four senses of Scripture. In addition to the historical sense «there are three kinds of spiritual knowledge - tropology, allegory, and anagogy» (*Conl.* 14.VIII). The explanation shows a perfect knowledge of the Alexandrian exegetical tradition (Origen, Didymus, Evagrius) as well as the later triple division of the spiritual sense found for the first time in Gregory of Nyssa, but there without explanation (*In Canticum canticorum homiliae xv, prol.*). For Cassian, as for Origen, progress in spiritual knowledge (understanding of the spiritual sense of the Scriptures) is connected to moral progress (*Conl.* 14.XIV-XVI). Cassian demonstrates his knowledge of the exegetical tradition also through his use of the rule of what is «worthy of God» (*Deo digne*) to interpret the more problematic pieces in Scripture, for example, those that speak of the «anger of God» (*Inst.* 8.I.14).¹¹ Also in the second volume there is a treatment of the classic philosophical subject

10 For extensive treatment of this subject, see R. H. WEAVER, *Divine Grace and Human Agency. A Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy* (Patristic Monograph Series 15), Macon, Ga. 1996, and especially the in-depth study by D. OGLIARI, *Gratia et certamen. The Relationship between Grace and Free Will in the Discussion of Augustine with the So-called Semipelagians* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 169), Leuven 2004.

11 For a more extensive treatment of this subject see the essay «“Digne deo”: A Traditional Greek Principle of Interpretation in Latin Dress», in this volume, 391-408.

of friendship (*Conl.* 16), which shows the influence of Cicero whose formulation (*De Amicitia* 21: «one mind and soul inhabiting two bodies») Cassian had already used at the beginning of the first Conference to describe his friendship with Germanus.¹²

At the beginning of the third volume in the Conferences 18-19, Cassian returns to the question of the relationship between the cenobitic and the anchoritic life. Although in the preface to the third volume he accepts the traditional superiority of the anchoritic life, he notes that these conferences «were so carefully composed and are so balanced in all respects that they are appropriate to both professions». In Conference 18 he emphasizes the necessity of a cenobitic formation before undertaking the anchoritic life, using also Acts 2:45; 4:32-35 to construct a historical justification for this principle. In Conference 19, however, he has Abba John return to the cenobium after twenty years passed as an anchorite, because in the cenobium there are fewer dangers and one can make progress more easily (*Conl.* 19.III-IV). At the same time he notes that, for those who left the cenobium too early, there are still remedies for making progress in the desert (*Conl.* 19.X-XIV). Thus the more important question is essentially not that of the superiority of the cenobitic or anchoritic life, but that of progress in the interior life.

Influence: Although Cassian is not venerated as a saint in the Western liturgical calendar outside of Marseille because of the conflicts with Augustinian orthodoxy, which was gaining ground in that period (e.g., Prosper of Aquitaine, *Contra Collatorem*) and because his name was included in the list of non-approved books falsely attributed to Pope Gelasius (*Decretum Gelasianum*) in the eighth century, his influence on Western monasticism was assured through the recommendation of his works at the end of the Rule of St. Benedict (ch. 73). In the latter rule the content of ch. 7 on humility is derived from Cassian (*Inst.* 4.XXXIX.2) by way of the Rule of the Master. St. Dominic always carried the Conferences with him in his travels. According to his biographer, St. Thomas Aquinas read a portion of Cassian every day. The works of Cassian were partially translated into Greek and are found in part in Photius' *Library* (*Bibliotheca* n. 197) and in the *Philocalia* of Nicodemus the Haghiarite and Macarius of Corinth. Cassian is venerated as a saint every-

12 K.A. NEUHAUSEN, «Zu Cassians Traktat De Amicitia (Coll. 16)», in *Studien zur Literatur der Spätantike*, ed. C. Gnllka - W. Schetter (Antiquitas 1,26), Bonn 1975, 181-218.

where in the Eastern Churches. He is the only Western (Latin) spiritual writer translated into Greek in antiquity.¹³

- 13 The most recent extensive modern commentary on Cassian's monastic works is: A. DE VOGÜÉ, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'antiquité* 6. *Les derniers écrits de Jérôme et l'oeuvre de Jean Cassien (414-428)* (Patrimoine christianisme), Paris 2002. Other significant studies include: L. WRZOL, «Die Psychologie des Johannes Cassianus», *Divus Thomas* 5 (1918) 181-213; 425-456; 7 (1920) 70-96; 9 (1922) 269-294; M. OLPHE-GALLIARD, «Vie contemplative et vie active d'après Cassien», *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique* 16 (1935) 252-298; *idem*, «La pureté du coeur d'après Cassien», *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique* 17 (1936) 28-60; *idem*, «La science spirituelle d'après Cassien», *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique* 18 (1937) 141-160; *idem*, «Cassien (Jean)», in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 2, Paris 1953, 214-276; J.C. GUY, *Jean Cassien. Vie et doctrine spirituelle*, Paris 1961; O. CHADWICK, *John Cassian*, Oxford 1968; *idem*, «Cassianus, Johannes», in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 7, Berlin-New York 1981, 650-657; PH. ROUSSEAU, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian*, Oxford 1978; C. TIBILETTI, «Giovanni Cassiano. Formazione e dottrina», *Augustinianum* 17 (1977) 355-380; *idem*, *Pagine monastiche provenzali. Il monachesimo nella Gallia del quinto secolo*, Roma 1990. V. MESSANA, *Povertà e lavoro nella paideia di Giovanni Cassiano*, Caltanissetta 1985; C. STEWART, *Cassian the Monk*, Oxford 1998; K.S. FRANK, «Johannes Cassian und seine Schriften: Das ägyptische Mönchtum als spiritueller Mutterboden des abendländischen Mönchtums», *Erbe und Auftrag* 73 (1997) 288-304; S.D. DRIVER, *John Cassian and the Reading of Egyptian Monastic Culture*, New York-London 2002; C. BADILITA - A. JAKAB, *Jean Cassien entre l'orient et l'occident*, Paris 2003; R.J. GOODRICH, *Contextualizing Cassian. Aristocrats, Asceticism, and Reformation in Fifth-Century Gaul* (Oxford Early Christian Studies), Oxford 2007; A.M.C. CASIDAY, *Tradition and Theology in St. John Cassian* (Oxford Early Christian Studies), Oxford 2007. For a survey of studies of Cassian in the last forty years, see R. ALCIATI, «Quarant'anni di studi cassianei (1968-2008)», *Rivista di Storia del Cristianesimo* 7 (2010) 229-248.

MAPPING THE INTELLECTUAL GENOME OF EARLY CHRISTIAN MONASTICISM

As Arthur Lovejoy, the founder of the discipline of the «history of ideas», observed in the first number of the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, «ideas are the most migratory things in the world. A preconception, category, postulate, dialectical motive, pregnant metaphor or analogy, “sacred word”, mood of thought or explicit doctrine, which makes its first appearance on the scene in one of the conventionally distinguished provinces of history (most often, perhaps, in philosophy) may, and frequently does, cross over into a dozen others».¹ The purpose of this paper is to examine the ways in which key concepts, particularly from the field of philosophy, crossed over and mutated in the early monastic literature.

Forty-six years ago Gregorio Penco published an article on the ascetical life as «philosophy» in the ancient monastic tradition, in which he noted that very early monks and ascetics had counterposed their own ideal of life and of Christian wisdom to that of empty worldly philosophy and had claimed for themselves the possession of the true philosophy and the title of «philosopher».² He noted also, following G. Bardy, that the origins of this attitude are to be found in certain texts of Clement and Eusebius which attribute to the word «philosophy» the sense of «ascetic» or «monastic» life rather than the usual sense of intellectual speculation common in ancient culture.

The following year Johannes Leipoldt published a lengthy article drawing attention to numerous parallels between Greek philosophic movements and early Christian asceticism and monasticism. According to Leipoldt, every aspect of the monastic life – the use of distinctive clothing, the aim of the subjection of the body, the notion of inner warfare, the idea of monastic life as the

1 A.O. LOVEJOY, «Reflections on the History of Ideas», *Journal of the History of Ideas* 1 (1940) 4.

2 G. PENCO, «La vita ascetica come “filosofia” nell’antica tradizione monastica», *Studia Monastica* 2 (1960) 73-93. Reprinted in G. Penco, *Spiritualità Monastica. Aspetti e momenti*, Abbazia di Praglia 1988, 66-82.

«philosophic life», and the whole terminology of asceticism, may be traced back to Greek philosophic thought.³

In the same year Anne-Marie Malingrey published a study of the word group «philosophy» in Greek literature from the pre-Socratics up to the fourth century AD, in which she traced the stages of development of the terms in the first four centuries of the Christian era until the word philosophy had become a term with Christian content. Crucial in this development was the passage from the sense of the word given by Plato as the aspiration of man to know transcendent realities to the sense given by Philo as the desire to know the revelation of the God of Israel and even to designate the Revelation itself.⁴ With Justin Martyr the word comes to designate the message of Jesus, not just the word of a transcendent God, but the word and example of a God made man. Clement of Alexandria speaks of the philosophy according to Christ and asserts that philosophy consists in the search for truth and the truth is Christ. Malingrey notes also that the word philosophy designated not only pure speculation but an art of living. Thus the expression «a philosophic life» came to designate for Eusebius the Christian way of life of Origen and Pamphilius and for Basil the ascetic discipline observed in a communal life. Malingrey insists on the multiple meanings of the word group in its long history and in diverse authors who left their personal imprint on its usage. Her study, however, deals only with the Greek tradition.⁵

Within the last forty years Pierre Hadot has published numerous essays on the nature of ancient philosophy in which he has stressed the notion of philosophy as a way of life and insisted on the spiritual exercises that were an integral part of this philosophical way of life. Observing that Christianity was able to present itself as a philosophy, he asserts: «the very fact that Christianity was able to present itself as a philosophy confirms the assertion that philosophy was conceived in antiquity as a way of life».⁶ According to Hadot, Christianity was obliged to integrate elements borrowed from ancient philosophy in order to present itself as a philosophy and it had to integrate philosophical spiritual exercises into Christian life.

3 J. LEIPOLDT, *Griechische Philosophie und Frühchristliche Askese*, Berlin 1961, 1-67.

4 A.M. MALINGREY, «*Philosophia*». *Étude d'un groupe de mots dans la littérature grecque* (Études et Commentaires 40), Paris 1961, 88-91.

5 MALINGREY, «*Philosophia*». 200-206, 296-300.

6 P. HADOT, *Philosophy as a Way of Life. Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. A.I. Davidson, Oxford 1995.

It is my purpose in this paper to revisit some of these assertions regarding philosophy and the monastic life and to examine the transmission of some of the key ideas particularly in the Latin tradition, which has been less studied. The first idea that I propose to examine is that of philosophy itself. Here we must first distinguish a number of questions. It is one thing to ask how ancient Christians viewed the Greek philosophical heritage and its literature, which is in large part the question of Malingrey. It is quite another to ask about the nature of that tradition itself, as does Hadot. Hadot is undoubtedly correct in insisting on philosophy as a way of life in antiquity, especially in contrast to later medieval and modern notions of philosophy, but there was also a strong speculative aspect to ancient philosophy. Leipoldt is certainly correct in noting that a significant part of the philosophical tradition was taken over and into the monastic tradition, but it is far from clear that the monastic movement was directly inspired by the philosophical tradition. One must ask how these ideas were taken over, what the channels of transmission were, and how this transmission relates to the explicit attitudes of ancient Christians toward the philosophical tradition. Were those who took over the philosophical heritage aware of what they were doing? From the point of view of the history of ideas, did these concepts undergo notable mutations, as some have insisted? Finally, in examining these questions, we need to disabuse ourselves of later distinctions, such as faith and reason, or natural reason and Revelation, etc., which can only lead to anachronistic judgments.

One of the earliest and most important channels of transmission of Greek philosophical ideas into the Judaeo-Christian tradition was through the works of Philo of Alexandria. Not only was Philo's knowledge of the philosophical tradition quite extensive and his attitude very positive, but he offered as well a theoretical justification for its use. In his *Life of Moses*, he asserts that Moses was both king and philosopher, a clear echo of Plato.⁷ Moses had received the best education possible in the entire school curriculum including the propaedeutic subjects, the philosophy conveyed by symbols (hieroglyphics), Assyrian letters, and the Chaldean science of the heavenly bodies.⁸ More importantly, perhaps, Moses behaved as a Stoic sage. He controlled the passions of youth and ate no more than necessary. He desired «to live to the soul alone and not to the body, he made a special practice of frugal contentment, and had an unparalleled scorn

7 PHILO, *Mos.* 2,2, (PLATO, *Republic* 473d).

8 PHILO, *Mos.* 2,21-23.

for a life of luxury. He exemplified his philosophical creed by his daily actions».⁹ He carried out the exercises of virtue having as a trainer

the reason within him, under whose discipline he laboured to fit himself for life in its highest forms, the theoretical and the practical. He was ever opening the scroll of philosophical doctrines, digested them inwardly with quick understanding, committed them to memory never to be forgotten, and straightway brought his personal conduct, praiseworthy in all respects, into conformity with them; for he desired truth rather than seeming, because the mark he set before him was nature's right reason, the sole source and fountain of virtues.¹⁰

In short Moses conducted a philosophic life. It is then hardly surprising that much of the content of the philosophic tradition should be found in his works, when they are interpreted allegorically. Malingrey has stressed that with Philo we have a real revolution in the significance of the word philosophy. It no longer has its origin in man alone, but is a gift of God and can indicate even the content of the Law. Thus it can be called «Jewish philosophy» or «sacred philosophy», or the «philosophy of their fathers».¹¹

It is clear that for Philo the Greek philosophical tradition represents the principal competition, more so than other religious traditions and that the competition has been resolved through massive identification with and appropriation of the competition. From now on the best of the philosophical tradition will be found in Sacred Scripture itself and transmitted through exegesis, chiefly of the allegorical type. This take-over, or absorption of philosophy into the interpretation of Scripture was rendered theoretically possible through the notion that Moses had preceded historically all the Greek philosophers, who had actually «borrowed» or found their valid teachings in the Jewish Scriptures. This idea can be found already in several second century Jewish writers such as Eupolemus, Pseudo-Eupolemus, Artapanes, and Aristobulus.¹² The idea that Moses preceded and is the font of the philosophers is in turn a transposition of the idea that Homer was the source of the teachings of the philoso-

9 PHILO, *Mos.* 1,28-29. The English translations are from: *Philo* 4, ed. F.H. Colson - G.H. Whitaker (LCL 261), Cambridge, Mass. 1935, 27.

10 PHILO, *Mos.* 1,48.

11 *Legat.*, 33; *Contempl.* 3; *Mos.* 2,216. MALINGREY, «*Philosophia*», 88-91.

12 See A.J. DROGE, *Homer or Moses?* (Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie 26), Tübingen 1989, 14- 35 and J.M.G. BARCLAY, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE - 117 CE)*, Berkeley 1996, 125-158.

phers, an idea already used to justify a philosophical exegesis of Homer.¹³ Philo is fully aware of the idea of the «theft» of the Greeks.¹⁴

As is well known, much of Philo's thought was taken over by Origen, but with some significant changes. For Origen, it is not Moses but Solomon who is the philosopher, although he does not give him this title. One reason for this switch is, perhaps, due to the Pauline identification of Moses with the text of the Law in 2 Corinthians, where the face of Moses is said to be covered by a veil. In any case, according to Origen, Solomon is the author of three books, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Canticle, which represent «three general disciplines by which one attains knowledge of the universe».¹⁵ These, he says, correspond to what the Greeks call ethics, physics and epoptics, which we can call moral, natural, and contemplative.¹⁶ Origen opines that in fact the Greeks took these ideas from Solomon, since he lived long before them and gave these teachings through the Spirit of God. The teaching is called «divine philosophy» and the three books of Solomon represent also three stages in the spiritual life, the purification of the soul, the discernment of natural things, and the contemplation of the Godhead. Origen also identifies this triple form of «divine philosophy» with the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Abraham expounds moral philosophy through his obedience. Isaac holds the place of natural philosophy, since he dug wells and explored the depths of things, while Jacob receives the subject of contemplation, «since he was named Israel because of the contempla-

13 See in general F. BUFFIÈRE, *Les mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque*, Paris 1956, and more recently L. BRISSON, *How Philosophers Saved Myths. Allegorical Interpretation and Classical Mythology*, tr. C. Tihanyi, Chicago 2004. As the first century manual by Heraclitus states it: «As the originator of all wisdom, Homer has, by using allegory, passed down to his successors the power of drawing from him, piece by piece, all the philosophy he was the first to discover». (34.8). See D.A. RUSSELL - D. KONSTAN, *Heraclitus. Homeric Problems* (Writings from the Greco-Roman World 14), Atlanta 2005, 62-63.

14 See C. MORESCHINI, *Storia della filosofia patristica* (Letteratura cristiana antica), Brescia 2004, 68. The idea is found, for example, in *Somn.* II,244; *Mut.* 167-168; *Her.* 213-214.

15 English translation from ORIGEN, *An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer, First Principles. Book IV, Prologue to the Commentary on the Song of Songs, Homily XXVII on Numbers*, tr. R.A. Greer, New York 1979, 231.

16 *ComCt.* *Prol.*: «Generales disciplinae... tres sunt quas Graeci ethicam, physicam, enopticen appellaverunt; has nos dicere possumus moralem, naturalem, inspectivam». The final phrase is obviously the comment of Rufinus. *Origenes Werke* VIII, 75, 1.6 (GCS 33), ed. W.A. Baehrens, Leipzig 1925. For «enopticen» read «epopticen». See ORIGÈN, *Commentaire sur le Cantique des Cantiques* (SCh 375-376), tr. L. Brésard - H. Crouzel - M. Borret, Paris 1991-1992, 1:129-131, 2:755.

tion of divine things».¹⁷ This represents a variation on an interpretation of the patriarchs already developed by Philo. In this framework it is possible for Origen to make use of philosophical materials in expounding the books of Solomon, because what is of value in the philosophical tradition comes from Solomon anyway. On the whole Origen is less positive about the philosophical heritage than Philo and his Christian predecessors (Justin, Athenagoras, Clement) and more concerned about the error found in it.¹⁸ However, he does use the word «philosophise» to indicate the allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures.¹⁹

Origen refers, as we have seen, to the content of the books of Solomon as «divine philosophy». Or did he? We cannot be certain because the original Greek text has been lost and there are reasons to suspect the translator, Rufinus of Aquileia.²⁰ At this point it is necessary to make a digression. In the sixth book of his Ecclesiastical History, Eusebius of Caesarea had said of the young Origen that

For a great number of years he continued to live like a philosopher in this wise, putting aside everything that might lead to youthful lusts; all day long his discipline (*askesis*) was to perform labours of no light character, and the greater part of the night he devoted himself to studying the divine Scriptures; and he persevered, as far as possible, in the most philosophic manner of life. ...²¹

Eusebius continues with a description of Origen's physical privations and further on adds that «by displaying proofs such as these of a philosophic life to

17 ORIGEN, *An Exhortation to Martyrdom*, 233-235.

18 MALINGREY, «*Philosophia*», 163-169.

19 MALINGREY, «*Philosophia*», 174. *CCels*, V,58 (II,61,16-17): Καὶ ἵνα γε μηδὲν περιεργάσωμαι περὶ τῶν κατὰ τὸν τόπον μηδὲ τροπολογίαν ἐπὶ τοῦ παρόντος ἐκτιθέμενος δόξω ἀκαίρως εἰς ταῦτα φιλοσοφεῖν, περὶ αὐτῆς ἐρῶ τῆς ἱστορίας ὅτι σεμνότερον αὐτόθεν φαίνεται τὸ τὸν ἐλάττονα καὶ ὑπηρέτην ἀποκεκυλικέναι «τὸν λίθον» ἢ τὸν ἐπὶ ὠφελείᾳ ἀνθρώπων ἀνιστάμενον τοῦτο πεποιηκέναι. *Origenes Werke* 2, 61, ed. P. Koetschau (GCS 3), Leipzig 1899.

20 See MALINGREY, «*Philosophia*», 175; H. DE LUBAC, «Typologie et allégorisme», *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 34 (1947) 199.

21 *Hist. eccl.* 6,3,9: πλείστοις τε ἔτεσιν τοῦτον φιλοσοφῶν διετέλει τὸν τρόπον, πάσας ὕλας νεωτερικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν ἑαυτοῦ περιαιρούμενος, καὶ διὰ πάσης μὲν ἡμέρας οὐ σμικροῦς ἀσκήσεως καμιάτους ἀναπ<μπ>λῶν, καὶ τῆς νυκτὸς δὲ τὸν πλεῖονα χρόνον ταῖς τῶν θείων γραφῶν ἑαυτὸν ἀνατιθεὶς μελέταις, βίω τε ὡς ἐνὶ μάλιστα ἐγκαρτερῶν φιλοσοφωτάτῳ, τοτὲ μὲν τοῖς ἐν ἀστίαις γυμνασίοις, τοτὲ δὲ μεμετρημένοις τοῖς κατὰ τὸν ὕπνον καιροῖς, οὗ μεταλαμβάνειν οὐδ' ὅλως ἐπὶ στρωμνῆς, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τοῦδαφος διὰ σπουδῆς ἐποιεῖτο *Eusebius Werke* II,2, ed. E. Schwartz (GCS 9,2), Leipzig 1908, 526,528. English translation from: EUSEBIUS, *Ecclesiastical History*, tr. J.E.L. Oulton (LCL 265), Cambridge, Mass. 1973, 21.

those who saw him» he inspired his pupils and even won over persons «from the ranks of learning and philosophy».²²

In Rufinus' translation the phrase «he continued to live like a philosopher in this wise» (τοῦτον φιλοσοφῶν διετέλει τὸν τρόπον) becomes «exercitiis per omnia Christianus philosophus habebatur». The phrase «philosophic life» (φιλοσόφου βίου) is omitted (or at least the adjective «philosophic») and the persons «from the ranks of learning and philosophy» become «quos a (gentili vita et) stulta philosophia ad veram Christi philosophiam sapientiamque converterat».²³ Malingrey has emphasized that Eusebius represents an important step in the adoption of the notion «philosophic life» as a description of the practice of the gospel or, as in the case of Origen, of what will later be called monastic life. Although Eusebius shares in the tradition that blames pagan thought for error, he is also very positive in his use of the words *philosophos* and *philosophhein*, even attributing them to Constantine, who knew how to unite all the spiritual riches of paganism and Christianity.²⁴

Clearly Rufinus does not share this perspective and has not hesitated to alter Eusebius' text. To discover the reasons for this more negative view would involve research into the Latin Christian usage that lies outside the scope of this paper. The introduction of the words «stulta» (foolish), however, to describe non-Christian philosophy and «sapientia», inevitably makes one think of the Pauline polemic against the wisdom of this world that God has turned into foolishness (1 Cor 1:20). The Pauline polemic suggests a situation of competition. It is a short step from «wisdom» to «philosophy» especially in Greek.

One cannot help suspecting, however, that Tertullian's famous question, «What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?» may be lurking in the background. It is worth mentioning the context of this question, because of the *topoi* involved.²⁵ The work where the question is found is *De praescriptione haeretico-*

22 *Hist. eccl.* 6,3,13: τοιαῦτα δὴ φιλοσόφου βίου τοῖς θεωμένοις παρέχων ὑποδείγματα, εἰκότως ἐπὶ τὸν ὅμοιον αὐτῷ ζῆλον πλείους παρῶρμα τῶν φοιτητῶν, ὥστε ἤδη καὶ τῶν ἀπίστων ἐθνῶν τῶν τε ἀπὸ παιδείας καὶ φιλοσοφίας οὐ τοὺς τυχόντας ὑπάγεσθαι τῇ δι' αὐτοῦ διδασκαλίᾳ *Eusebius Werke* II,2, 528.

23 *Hist. eccl.* 6,3,13; *Eusebius Werke* II,2, 529.

24 MALINGREY, «*Philosophia*», 205-206.

25 *Prescription against Heretics*, VII, 18-22: «Whence spring those “fables and endless genealogies”, and “unprofitable questions”, and “words which spread like a cancer”? From all these, when the apostle would restrain us, he expressly names *philosophy* as that which he would have us be on our guard against. Writing to the Colossians, he says, “See that no one beguile you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, and contrary

rum and the context is a polemic against errors. Tertullian cites the two places in the New Testament where the word philosophy or philosophers is found, in the first case Col 2:8 where philosophy is regarded as a source of error and the second Acts 17:18 where Paul is debating with some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. In this case the philosophers appear to be the competition. These two *topoi*, philosophy as the source of error and heresy, and the philosophers as the competition will recur often in patristic and monastic literature.

What is of interest to us here is how these ideas found their way into the latin monastic tradition. In his third Conference, after describing three types of vocation («the first is from God, the second is by human agency, and the third is out of need») and then three renunciations, John Cassian introduces the three books of Solomon, which, he says, refer to the three renunciations.

For Proverbs is related to the first renunciation; by it the desire for fleshly things and the earthly vices are cut off. Ecclesiastes, wherein all that is accomplished under the sun is declared vain, is related to the second renunciation. The Canticle of Canticles, in which the mind transcends everything that is visible and is already joined to the Word of God by the contemplations of heavenly things, is related to the third.²⁶

Here we are witnessing a fusion of ideas with a very complex history. Evagrius of Pontus had described three renunciations,²⁷ but had not juxtaposed them with the three books of Solomon or the three parts of philosophy. In his Scholion on Proverbs 22:20 («Write them three times for yourself on the table of your heart for counsel and knowledge»), he had stated that

to the wisdom of the Holy Ghost". He had been at Athens, and had in his interviews (with its philosophers) become acquainted with that human wisdom which pretends to know the truth, whilst it only corrupts it, and is itself divided into its own manifold heresies, by the variety of its mutually repugnant sects. What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? what between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from "the porch of Solomon", who had himself taught that "the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart". Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition! We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus, no inquisition after enjoying the gospel! With our faith, we desire no further belief». The translation is from ANF 3, tr. P. Holmes, New York 1885, 246.

26 *Conl.* 3.VI.4. The English translations of Cassian are taken from JOHN CASSIAN, *The Conferences*, ed. B. Ramsey, (ACW 57), New York 1997, 124.

27 A. DE VOGÜÉ, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'antiquité* 6. *Les derniers écrits de Jérôme et l'oeuvre de Jean Cassien (414-428)* (Patrimoine christianisme), Paris 2002, 199.

The one who will have enlarged his heart through purity will understand the words of God, which are practical, physical, and theological, because the whole teaching of Scripture is divided in three parts: ethics, physics, and theology. And Proverbs belongs to the first, Ecclesiastes to the second, the Canticle of Canticles to the third.²⁸

In this passage also we see a fusion and mutation of ideas, for Origen had used the same Proverb in *Peri Archon* IV,2,4 to justify the three senses of Scripture, literal, moral and spiritual, but had not related it to the three books of Solomon. Evagrius in effect has extended the philosophical interpretation of the books of Solomon to the entire Scripture and effectively produced four levels of interpretation, for the three disciplines represent three senses of Scripture.²⁹

The three vocations mentioned by Cassian are found in the first letter of Antony together with the command addressed to Abraham (Gen 12:1): «Leave your country and your kinsfolk and your father's house».³⁰ That the source of this idea is in fact the first letter of Antony is suggested by the fact that Cassian then cites Antony as an example of the first kind of vocation. Cassian's development of the idea, however, does not follow closely the letter of Antony. Later, however, Cassian uses the same citation of Genesis to connect the three vocations to the three renunciations, this time by separating the three members of the quotation: country, kinsfolk, and father's house and giving to each in effect an allegorical meaning relating to the three renunciations. It may be in the end the attraction of the number three that has brought together the idea of vocation, renunciation, and the three books of Solomon. In any case the interpretation of Abraham's call as a call to take up a spiritual itinerary ultimately goes back to Philo.³¹

Although Cassian does not mention the three books of Solomon in connection with the three disciplines of ethics, physics, and theology, as does Evagrius, he is fully aware of this idea and alludes to it in the fifth conference. There he

28 Scholion 247: Ὁ πλατύνων διὰ τῆς καθαρότητος τὴν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ νοήσει τοὺς τοῦ θεοῦ λόγους τοὺς τε πρακτικοὺς καὶ τοὺς φυσικοὺς καὶ τοὺς θεολογικοὺς. Πᾶσα γὰρ ἡ κατὰ τὴν γραφὴν πραγματεία τέμενται τριχῶς εἰς ἠθικὴν καὶ φυσικὴν καὶ θεολογικὴν. Καὶ ἀκολουθεῖ τῇ μὲν πρώτη αἱ Παραοιμίαι, τῇ δὲ δευτέρᾳ ὁ Ἐκκλησιαστής, τῇ δὲ τρίτῃ τὰ Ἄσματα τῶν ᾠσμάτων. EVAGRE LE PONTIQUE, *Scholies aux Proverbes*, ed. P. Géhin (SCh 340), Paris 1987, 342.

29 EVAGRE LE PONTIQUE, *Scholies aux Proverbes*, 28-30.

30 See S. RUBENSON, *The Letters of St. Antony. Origenist Theology, Monastic Tradition and the Making of a Saint* (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity), Minneapolis 1995, 197.

31 See *Migr.* 1-13.

mentions an unnamed elder who is discussing the nature of the vice of gluttony with «some philosophers, who believed that they could treat him like a rustic because of his Christian simplicity». The discussion leads the philosophers to conclude that the «illiterate rustic had an excellent understanding of the first part of philosophy – namely, ethics». The philosophers are astonished that he had been able to achieve this knowledge naturally, «which no worldly education had conferred on him, while they themselves had been unable to achieve this even with much effort and lengthy study».³² Cassian is introducing a *topos* here that we have already noted, which is probably inspired by the discussion of Antony with the philosophers in the Life by Athanasius and that in turn is ultimately inspired by the discussion of Paul with the philosophers in Acts. The philosophers are the competition. It is just possible that they were still really the competition in fifth century southern Gaul.³³ The implication is that the monk conducts a philosophic way of life without being instructed in it. What is interesting is that the philosophic presuppositions are accepted, namely, that the first part of philosophy is ethics.

Cassian reintroduces the *topos* of the philosophers in the eighth conference, this time with an explicit reference to the two philosophers who visited Antony.³⁴ The context of the conference is the question of demonic powers. In Athanasius' version of the story, the philosophers, after being exhorted by Antony to imitate him, depart full of wonder, because they see that the demons are afraid of him. Cassian expands this notion by attributing to the philosophers the desire «to drive him out of his cell by magic feats and demonic trickery» and they send very wicked spirits against him. According to Cassian they were motivated «by the sting of envy because great crowds of people would come to him every day as to a friend of God». The latter phrase in fact comes from ch. 4 of the *Vita Antonii*. The theme of envy has been introduced to put the philosophers in a bad light. Again they appear as the competition, as they did in Athanasius.

In the same conference there are some other interesting contacts with the philosophical tradition. In order to treat the question of demonology, Cassian

32 *Conl.* 5.XXI.1: *Tum illi hunc, quem uelut idiotam ac rusticum ante despexerant, pronuntiauerunt primas philosophiae partes, id est ethicam disciplinam adprime comprehendisse, mirati admodum potuisse eum naturaliter adsequi quod nulla ei saecularis eruditio contulisset, cum ipsi sudore multo longaque doctrina ita haec adtingere nequiuissent.* Latin text: J. CASSIAN, *Conlationes*, ed. M. Petschenig (CSEL 13), Wien 1886, 147.

33 For a description of the conditions in Provence in that period, see: O. CHADWICK, *John Cassian. A Study in Primitive Monasticism*, Cambridge² 1968, 32ff.

34 *Vit. Ant.* 72.

must deal with some common opinions, one of which is the interpretation of Gen 6:2, according to which some of the angels fell because they were seduced by feminine beauty or as Germanus puts it: «what should be thought about those apostate angels that are said to have had intercourse with the daughters of men?»³⁵ Although this idea can be found in many patristic sources (including Justin, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian), Cassian wishes to exclude it and so offers an alternative explanation according to which the story refers to the sons of Seth and the daughters of Cain. This explanation can be found already in Jerome and Augustine.³⁶ The sons of Seth, he says, «are the ones who abandoned the true discipline of natural philosophy which was handed down to them by their forbears and which that first man, who was at once immersed in the study of all natural things, was able to grasp clearly and to pass on in unambiguous fashion to his descendants».³⁷ This first man was filled by a divine inbreathing «not only with the plenitude of wisdom but also with the grace of prophecy».³⁸ He could name every animal and the words of Solomon in the Book of Wisdom could be attributed to him: «The Lord has given me a true knowledge of the things that exist... Whatever is hidden and open I have learned» (Wis 7:17-21). The connecting thread here, which allows the citation of Wisdom, is the notion of Solomon as the author of three books of philosophy. Here it is a question of the discipline of physics. This is confirmed by the citation of Ecclesiastes (which, it will be recalled, represents physics) later in the conference to confirm the distinct nature of bodily and spiritual substances.³⁹

In his effort to exclude the idea of a possible union between spiritual and bodily substances (angels and men) as a source of demons, Cassian has introduced a new idea, which is in fact a very old idea, the notion of primitivism, that is, the progressive decline from an original ideal age.⁴⁰ This is done on the basis of the Genesis account of creation of course, but not only. Genesis knows noth-

35 *Conl.* 8.XX.

36 See C. ROBERT, «Les fils de Dieu et les filles des hommes», *Revue Biblique* 4 (1895) 365.

37 *Conl.* 8.XXI.4: *quique ab illa uera physicae philosophiae disciplina tradita sibi a maioribus exciderunt, quam primus homo ille, qui uniuersarum naturarum institutionem e uestigio subsecutus est, potuit euidenter adtingere suisque posteris certa ratione transmittere* (CSEL 13), 238.

38 *Conl.* 8.XXI.4-5.

39 *Conl.* 8.XXV.3.

40 A.O. LOVEJOY - G. BOAS, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity (with supplementary essays by W. F. Albright and P.-E. Dumont)*, Baltimore 1937.

ing of the idea of the seed of Seth enjoying universal knowledge from generation to generation (an expansion with the help of Wis 7:17-21). This situation of natural philosophy lasted until the sons of Seth intermingled with the daughters of Cain:

When it intermingled with the wicked generation it fell into profane and harmful deeds that it had dutifully learned at the instigation of demons, and thereupon it boldly instituted the strange arts of wizards, sleights and magic tricks, teaching its descendants that they should abandon the sacred cult of the Divinity and worship and adore the elements and fire and the demons of the air.⁴¹

Cassian then adds a story, introduced by the phrase «as the ancient traditions testify», to explain how wizardry and magic survived the flood. Ham, who was instructed in «superstitions and sacrilegious and profane arts», knew that he would not be able to take a book about this onto the ark and so he engraved the knowledge of these things on metal plates and hard stone. After the flood was over he found these, which he then handed on to his descendants. A similar story attributing the origin of magic to Ham, but without the metal plates to survive the flood, is found in the Clementine Recognitions.⁴²

Here we have yet another idea, related to, or developed from primitivism, that is, the common source of all errors or the history of error, which depends on the idea that at the beginning there was no error. We find this idea developed extensively at the beginning of Epiphanius' great work, the *Panarion*, which had been published some forty years before Cassian was writing.⁴³ This idea is re-

41 *Conl.* 8.XXI.6: *Cum uero impiae generationi fuisset admixtum, ad res profanas ac noxias quae pie didicerat instinctu quoque daemonum deriuauit curiosasque ex ea maleficiorum artes atque praestigias ac magicas superstitiones audaciter instituit, docens posteros suos, ut sacro illo cultu diuini numinis derelicto uel elementa haec uel ignem uel aërios daemones uenerarentur et colerent* (CSEL 13), 239.

42 *Rec. Clem.* 4,27: «One of these, by name Ham, unhappily discovered the magical act, and handed down the instruction of it to one of his sons, who was called Mesraim, from whom the race of the Egyptians and Babylonians and Persians are descended. Him the nations who then existed called Zoroaster, admiring him as the first author of the magic art; trader whose name also many books on this subject exist», (ANF 8), 140. *Die Pseudoklementinin 2. Rekognitionen in Rufins Übersetzung*, ed. B. Rehm (GCS 51), Berlin 1965, 159.

43 EPIPHANIUS OF SALAMIS, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis. Book 1 (Sects 1-46)*, ed. F. Williams, Leiden-New York 1987, 8-9. Epiphanius mentions (Anacephalaeosis I) «five mothers of all the sects» and then lists four: Barbarism, Scythianism, Hellenism, and Judaism. These in turn have many divisions. To justify these four «mothers» he cites Col 3:11 «in Christ Jesus there is neither Barbarian, Scythian, Hellene nor Jew».

lated to and an expansion of the notion that philosophy is a source of erroneous doctrine or heresy.

We have already noted the presence of the motif of the philosophers as the competition in Cassian, but the clearest example of this occurs in Conference 13 in the context of the question of chastity and free will. Germanus says that «They (the philosophers) are said to have possessed the purest chastity thanks to their own laborious efforts». The reply of Chaeremon is that they never attained the kind of chastity that is demanded of monks, but only a «small portion of chastity, that is abstinence of the flesh». He then introduces a story about Socrates (with quotations in Greek not found elsewhere) to support this affirmation concluding that the philosophers «only repressed actual immoral behavior», but the desire for and delight in this passion had not been removed from their hearts. This is followed by an uncomplimentary anecdote regarding Diogenes. Thus two of the most prominent Greek philosophers are compared negatively to the Christian monks.⁴⁴ The background here is the Pelagian controversy and Cassian is at pains to insist on the necessity of grace.

There are also additional examples of the pejorative use of the term philosophy in Cassian's works or of the perception of philosophy as a danger. Toward the end of the first Conference the Abbot Moses warns that we should scrutinize whatever enters our hearts to see whether it is a part of Jewish superstition (an allusion to Titus 1:14?) or comes from the pridefulness of worldly philosophy. He notes that certain teachings of the philosophers seem attractive at first like counterfeit coins, but can drag one into heretical errors and bloated presumptions.⁴⁵ In the second Conference a monk who refused to observe discretion in fasting according to the traditions of the elders is said to have fallen back «into the empty philosophy of this world and earthly vanity».⁴⁶ The phraseology may be inspired by Col 2:8.

Finally it must also be mentioned that Cassian uses the term philosophy in a positive sense, but then it is termed «Christian philosophy». In the fourth Conference the Abbot Daniel is said to be among «the other men devoted to the Christian philosophy»⁴⁷ and, in his work against Nestorius, Cassian refers

44 *Conl.* 13.V.2-4.

45 *Conl.* 1.XX.2-3.

46 *Conl.* 2.XXIV.1 (ACW 57, 102).

47 *Conl.* 4.I.1 (ACW 57, 155).

to Rufinus as a *Christianae philosophiae vir*.⁴⁸ In these cases the phrase seems to refer to a way of life or to sound doctrine. The reference to Rufinus is significant, because it suggests that Cassian's usage may have been influenced by Rufinus.

To summarize Cassian's usage of the term «philosophy», we have seen that in a positive sense, when qualified by the adjective «true» it can refer to the original knowledge of all natural things, to universal knowledge, the same knowledge that is taught in the books of Solomon. Here Cassian is the inheritor of an idea that stretches back through Origen to Philo of Alexandria and includes the notion of primitivism. This is a very different view from the modern notion of progressive reflection or a progressive development of the philosophic tradition in which later reflection is developed on the basis of earlier thought. It is also distinct from the later concepts of faith and reason or the idea of what reason unaided by revelation can discover. To put the contrast somewhat sharply, one might say that for the modern thinker ideas have a history; for the ancient one it is error that has a history, not truth. The negative use of the terms «philosophy» and «philosophers» reflect two *topoi* whose origin may be found in the New Testament, philosophy as a source of error or heresy and philosophers as representing the competition. It is not easy to determine to what extent they really were the competition in the society of early fifth century southern Gaul.

The negative characterisation of the philosophical tradition as a source of heresy and error did not, however, hinder the process of absorption of philosophical ideas in the monastic tradition. The critical thinker, capable of scrutinizing these ideas, could use what belonged to the true, original philosophy, because these ideas simply corresponded to the nature of things, whether in the area of ethics or in that of physics. Thus it is possible to find many ideas in the monastic writings whose origin lies in the philosophical tradition. These include, in Cassian's works, the notion of *prosoche*, *askesis*, *apatheia*, the indifferent things (*adiaphora*) and others. Many modern writers have had a tendency to admit this somewhat apologetically and suggest that, while it is true, the concepts have been transformed in the Christian or monastic context. Although in some cases this may be true, one must be careful not to project such a view onto ancient writers. The ancient writer saw no such need to transform what was simply true. Christian writers could and did take different positions regarding the truth value of certain ideas, but the ideas were considered either correct or erroneous,

48 *De Incarnatione Domini contra Nestorium* VII, 27, ed. M. Petschenig (CSEL 17), Wien 1888, 385.

as in the case of *apatheia*. Here we have time to examine only one case, that of the notion of *prosoche* or «attention».

In the first great classic of monastic literature, the *Life of Antony*, Athanasius describes Antony at the beginning of his monastic life in this way: «he devoted himself from then on to the discipline rather than the household, giving heed to himself and patiently training himself». Athanasius is introducing here two venerable philosophical ideas, *prosoche* (attention) and *askesis* (practice), which he underlines by repeating them in the following sentence after noting that there were not yet many monasteries in Egypt, «but each of those wishing to give attention to his life disciplined himself in isolation, not far from his own village». ⁴⁹ A modern commentator has observed that the primordial attitude represented by the word *prosoche* (attention to oneself), which appears thus as the very essence of monasticism, is actually an allusion to Deut 4:9 and 15:9: «Take heed to yourself». ⁵⁰ Moses, he says, launched this appeal not to invite to introspection but to recall Israel to observe the divine commandments. It is thus less a question of knowing oneself in the manner of Socrates, he notes, than of opening oneself to the divine will. ⁵¹ However, the pair of terms, *prosoche* (attention) and *askesis* had a long history of being linked in the philosophical tradition. In his work, *Contra Celsum*, Origen, in order to refute Celsus' position that it is difficult to change a man's nature, had observed that some men have learned «to walk on a tight-rope stretched across the theater in mid-air». He insists that if it is possible to achieve this with attention (*prosoche*) and with practice (*askesis*), it is also possible for a nature that wants to live virtuously to do so with the same attention and practice. ⁵² The same comparison to the tight-rope walker is found earlier in the philosophic tradition in Musonius Rufus and in his pupil

49 *Vit. Ant.* 3: αὐτὸς πρὸ τῆς οἰκίας ἐσχόλαζε λοιπὸν τῇ ἀσκήσει, προσέχων ἑαυτῷ καὶ καρτερικῶς ἑαυτὸν ἄγων. Οὕτω γὰρ ἦν οὕτως ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ συνεχῇ μοναστήρια οὐδ' ὅλως ἦδει μοναχὸς τὴν μακρὰν ἔρημον. Ἐκαστος δὲ τῶν βουλομένων ἑαυτῷ προσέχειν οὐ μακρὰν τῆς ἰδίας κόμης καταμόνας ἡσκεῖτο. The most recent critical edition of the Greek text is found in: ATHANASE D'ALEXANDRIE, *Vie d'Antoine*, ed. G.J.M. Bartelink (SCh 400), Paris 1994 The English translation is from: ATHANASIUS, *The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, ed. R.C. Gregg (Classics of Western Spirituality), New York 1980, 32.

50 Deut 4:9: πρόσχε σεαυτῷ καὶ φύλαξον τὴν ψυχὴν σου σφόδρα. Deut 15:9: πρόσχε σεαυτῷ μὴ γένηται ῥῆμα κρυπτὸν ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου.

51 A. DE VOGÜÉ, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'Antiquité 1. Le monachisme latin de la mort d'Antoine à la fin du séjour de Jérôme à Rome (356-385)* (Patrimoine christianisme), Paris 1991, 48-49.

52 ORIGEN, *Contra Celsum*, tr. H. Chadwick, Cambridge 1953, 174.

Epictetus.⁵³ Whether Athanasius took the pair of terms from Origen or from his knowledge of the philosophical tradition is hard to say, but it is very doubtful that he was thinking chiefly of Deuteronomy, where the term *askesis* does not occur.

Although the earliest Latin translation of the *Life of Antony* rendered these two terms with the words *attendere* and *studium deificans*,⁵⁴ in the version by Evagrius of Antioch made some twenty years later, they simply disappeared.⁵⁵ The latter version was more refined from a literary point of view and enjoyed greater popularity. It appears to have been the one available to Cassian. At about the same time as Evagrius' translation, Basil of Caesarea delivered a famous homily on the words of Deut 15:9 «Take heed lest there be a base thought in your heart». The homily was translated by Rufinus of Aquileia, who did not, however, use the Vulgate version⁵⁶ but translated the phrase from Deuteronomy as «Attende tibi, ne forte fiat in corde tuo sermo occultus iniquitas». Basil repeats the phrase *πρόσεχε σεαυτῷ* innumerable times in the homily and Rufinus always renders it as *Attende tibi*.

The word *attendere* does not occur in the *Institutions* or *Conferences* of Cassian, as it did not in Evagrius' translation of the *Life of Antony*. That does not mean, however, that the concept is missing from Cassian. The comparison with the tight-rope walker can be found in the works of Seneca (two hundred years earlier than Origen), where it is applied to the question of the possibility of overcoming anger. There is nothing so difficult, says Seneca, that the human

53 ORIGEN, *Contra Celsum*, 174.

54 *Vit. Ant.* 3, 1-2: *et ipse extra domum vacabat studio religionis se severiter educans. 2. Nondum enim sic continuo erant mansiones monachorum in Aegypto ut sunt modo, nec omnino sciebat monachus longa et deserta loca. Unus quisque eorum qui volebant sibi attendere non longe a suo municipio habitabat, studio deifico vacans. Vita di Antonio*, intr. Ch. Mohrmann, ed. G.J.M. Bartelink, tr. P. Citati – S. Lilla, Verona 1974.

55 The text of Evagrius' translation is found in PL 73, 125ff. and PG 26, 843-844: *ipse jam omnibus saeculi vinculis liber, asperum atque arduum arripuit institutum. Necdum autem tam crebra erant in Aegypto monasteria: neque omnino quisquam aviam solitudinem noverat: sed quicumque in Christi servitute sibimet (ipsi) prodesse cupiebat, haud procul a sua villula separatus instituebatur*. For a careful study of the technical terminology in both Latin versions, see L.T.A. LORIE, *Spiritual Terminology in the Latin Translations of the Vita Antonii with reference to fourth and fifth century monastic literature*, Utrecht 1955.

56 Deut 15:9: *cave ne forte subripiat tibi impia cogitatio*.

57 BASILIUS MAGNUS, «Rufini interpretatio homiliae in Deut. XV,9» (PG 31), 1733-1744. BASIL, «Homilia in illud: Attende tibi ipsi (Deut 15,9)», in *Ascetical Works*, tr. M.M. Wagner (Fathers of the Church 9), New York 1950, 431-446.

mind cannot overcome it with *adsidua meditatio* and *disciplina*. A few lines later, speaking specifically of the example of the tight-rope walker, he uses the words *meditatus est* and *pertinacis studiis* to render *prosoche* and *askesis*.⁵⁸ Jerome, who knew the works of Seneca very well indeed, used this terminology in his Letter 133 where he asserts that the Stoic philosophers insist that the passions may be removed by means of *meditatione et adsidua exercitatione uirtutum*.⁵⁹ It is not surprising then that we find this terminology in the works of Cassian.

In the seventh Conference, Cassian has the abbot Serenus remark that in every profession attention (*meditatio*) and daily practice (*studio*) lead to the acquisition of a stable capacity in that art.⁶⁰ More often, however, *meditatio* (and once *adsidua meditatio*) is directed toward the Scriptures.⁶¹ But there are other terms which also render the content of the idea of «attention» or *prosoche*. In Deuteronomy 4:9 the admonition *πρόσεχε σεαυτῷ* (take heed to yourself) is in parallel with the verb *φύλαξον* (guard): «Take heed to yourself, and guard your soul diligently». This is translated in the Vulgate as «custodi igitur temet ipsum et animam tuam sollicite». Thus the word *custodire* comes to represent the concept of *prosoche* (attention) and this terminology abounds in Cassian's works especially with reference to the thoughts (*cogitationes*), a major concern of the inner man.⁶²

We can conclude this examination of the transmission of one philosophical concept with the observation that the channels of transmission are many and various. The Scriptures, philosophical writings in Latin as well as earlier ecclesi-

58 SENECA, *Ira* II,12,5.

59 Jerome, *Epist.* 133,1: *illi enim, quae graeci appellant πᾶθη, nos perturbationes possumus dicere, aegritudinem uidelicet et gaudium, spem et metum, quorum duo praesentia, duo futura sunt, adserunt extirpari posse de mentibus et nullam fibram radicem que uitiorum in homine omnino residere meditatione et adsidua exercitatione uirtutum* (CSEL 56, 242). Earlier in *Epist.* 69,9 in writing about the training of bishops he had lamented those who had not corrected their conduct through assiduous meditation: *non ieiunauit, non fleuit, non mores suos saepe reprehendit et adsidua meditatione correxit, non substantiam pauperibus erogauit: de cathedra, quod dicitur, ad cathedram, id est de superbia ad superbiam* (CSEL 54, 698).

60 *Conl.* 7.III.2: *etenim cum omnium disciplinarum meditatio ad hoc cotidianis studiis exerceatur atque proficiat, ut a trepidis rudimentis ad peritiam certam stabilem que perueniens incipiat nosse quae primitus uel ambigue nouerat uel penitus ignorabat, et firmo ut ita dixerim gradu in illius disciplinae qualitate procedens perfecte in ea ac sine ulla iam difficultate uersetur, e contrario me in huius puritatis studio laborantem id solummodo profecisse repperio, ut sciam quid esse non possum* (CSEL 13, 181).

61 *Inst.* 2.VI. See also among others *Conl.* 1.VII, XVII.

62 *Inst.* 2.XIV.

astical authors play a role. Although the word *meditatio* is found with the more general meaning of attention, there is a shift in use to refer to attentive meditation on the Scriptures and the word *custodire* tends to become more common for the more general idea of attention to oneself.

There is ample space left for research into the history and development of ideas (or of their disappearance, which often occurs in translation) within the monastic tradition, or, in other words, for mapping the intellectual genome of early Christian monasticism.

«FIRST MOVEMENTS» (*PROPATHEIAI*) IN JOHN CASSIAN¹

Considerable attention has been given in recent years to the concept of *propatheia* (προπάθεια) as developed among the Stoics and early Church writers. Originally developed to explain the category of non-rational affective reactions that could be raised as objections to the Stoic theory of the passions, the notion of *propatheia* was employed to distinguish involuntary affective reactions to external stimuli from genuine emotions or passions, which involve an intervention of reason (a judgement). Seneca, who provides the most complete description of the concept, describes these affects as «preludes to passion» (*principia proludentia adfectibus*).² For Seneca the notion is used to defend the Stoic contention that freedom from emotional disturbance (*apatheia*) is a possible philosophic goal.³

Origen, on the other hand, employed the idea not so much to defend a philosophical concept as to explain and limit problematical Scriptural texts such as Ps 4:5 «Be angry and do not sin». His solution was to insist that the term «anger» can be used both to refer to something voluntary and to something involuntary, as in the case of the psalm verse.⁴ Layton contends that both Seneca and Origen maintain the categorical distinction between involuntary events that an agent passively suffers and voluntary dispositions that the same agent cultivates. This sharp distinction becomes effaced in the commentaries of Didymus.⁵

Sorabji, however, sees the blurring beginning already with Philo and Origen. In these authors the point that the *propatheiai* (= first movements) are not yet

1 This essay was presented at the Oxford Patristic Conference in 2007, but has not been previously published.

2 SENECA, *Ira* 2,2,5.

3 R.A. LAYTON, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria: Virtue and Narrative in Biblical Scholarship*, Chicago 2004, 114-117.

4 ORIGEN, *Selecta in Psalmos*, Ps 4:5 (PG 12.1141D): Ὁργίσεθε, καὶ μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε, κ. τ. ἐ. Ἡ, «ὀργίσεσθε,» φωνὴ σημαίνει τὸ προστακτικὸν κατηγορήμα· σημαίνει δὲ καὶ τὸ ὀριστικὸν ὑπὸ τινος καλούμενον διαβεβαιωτικόν, οἷον· The attribution of this fragment to Origen is, however, regarded as dubious.

5 LAYTON, *Didymus the Blind*, 118-119 and n. 22.

emotion is less clear; they are treated more vaguely as some kind of preliminary to emotion.⁶ With Origen a major shift occurs when the first movements become connected with the idea of bad thoughts found in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. These thoughts (*logismoi*, *cogitationes*) may be suggested by various sources including demons and are also derived from our natural constitution. According to Sorabji, Origen's conflation of the *propatheiai* with thoughts made it unclear whether those undergoing first movements are experiencing emotion. At other times Origen maintains the Stoic distinction faithfully.⁷

In the works of Evagrius of Pontus the treatment of the thoughts is greatly expanded and systematised into eight principal thoughts, but the distinction between the first movements (the word *propatheia* is not used) and emotion itself is maintained. The thoughts are not yet sin, but only temptation.⁸ With Augustine and Jerome the situation changes dramatically, for they both rejected the very idea of *apatheia* as a goal. Jerome identified it with sinlessness, a state that man in his fallen condition cannot attain. Augustine went so far as to deny any real distinction between the first movements and emotion or passion.⁹ The context of the Pelagian controversy after 415 reinforced the need to deny such a distinction that might leave open the possibility of human action unaided by grace.

This was the intellectual situation when Cassian began to write around the year 420. I have argued elsewhere that Cassian was aware of the positions of at least Evagrius, Jerome and Augustine and that he repeatedly presents the ideal of *apatheia* (as had Evagrius) using the traditional Latin terminology stemming from Cicero and Seneca.¹⁰ But how does he deal with the distinction between the *propatheiai* and the passions?

By far the most frequent designation employed by Cassian to indicate the *propatheiai* is, as might be expected, the term «thoughts» (*cogitationes*). His basic position, as stated by the Abbot Moses in the first Conference, is very clear. «It is, indeed, impossible for the mind not to be troubled by thoughts, but ac-

6 R. SORABJI, *Emotion and Peace of Mind. From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (The Gifford Lectures), Oxford 2000, 343-352.

7 SORABJI, *Emotion and Peace of Mind. From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, 348.

8 SORABJI, *Emotion and Peace of Mind. From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, 359-360.

9 SORABJI, *Emotion and Peace of Mind. From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, 372-381.

10 M. SHERIDAN, «The Controversy over ἀπάθεια. Cassian's sources and his use of them», in this volume, 335-363.

cepting them or rejecting them is possible for everyone who makes an effort. It is true that their origin does not in every respect depend on us, but it is equally true that their refusal or acceptance does depend on us» (*Conl.* 1.XVII.1).¹¹ He goes on to suggest that we can improve the quality of our thoughts: «But it is, I say, largely up to us whether the character of our thoughts improves and whether either holy and spiritual thoughts or earthly and carnal ones increase in our hearts» (*Conl.* 1.XVII.2).¹² This desire to improve the quality of our thoughts is also the motivation for a whole series of spiritual exercises such as reading, meditation, chanting of psalms, etc., as indeed recommended by Evagrius. Seneca too had observed that, although reason cannot avoid first movements (*primum ictus*), practice and assiduous attention can attenuate them. So far we seem to be in line with the Stoic position. However, there are also significant departures from Stoic orthodoxy.

According to the Abbot Moses, thoughts can also be distinguished according to their sources: «They come from God, from the devil, and from ourselves» (*Conl.* 1.XIX.1).¹³ This makes it imperative to examine carefully «all the thoughts that emerge in our heart, first tracing their origins and causes and their authors, so that, in accordance with the status of whoever is suggesting them, we may be able to consider how we should approach them» (*Conl.* 1.XX.1).¹⁴ This threefold distinction of the sources of thoughts appears to depend on Origen's treatment of the subject in the *Peri Archon*.¹⁵

But Cassian also distinguishes the beginnings of the thoughts (*principia* or *initia*) from their fully developed form. Abba Pinufius exhorts a new monk to

11 *Conl.* 1.XVII.1: *Moyse: Mentem quidem non interpellari cogitationibus impossibile est, suscipere uero eas siue respuere omni studenti possibile est. Quemadmodum igitur ortus earum non omnimodis pendet a nobis, ita probatio uel electio consistit in nobis.* The English citations of Cassian are from: JOHN CASSIAN, *The Conferences*, tr. B. Ramsey (ACW 57), New York 1997 and JOHN CASSIAN, *The Institutes*, tr. B. Ramsey (ACW 58), New York 2000.

12 *Conl.* 1.XVII.2: *Sed est, inquam, nostrum magna ex parte, ut cogitationum qualitas emendetur et uel sanctae ac spiritalis in cordibus nostris uel terrenae carnalesque concrecant.*

13 *Conl.* 1.XIX.1: *Illud sane prae omnibus nosse debemus tria cogitationum nostrarum esse principia, id est ex deo, ex diabolo et ex nobis.*

14 *Conl.* 1.XX.1: *Hanc igitur tripertitam rationem oportet nos iugiter obseruare et uniuersas cogitationes quae emergunt in corde nostro sagaci discretionem discutere, origines earum et causas auctoresque primitus indagantes, ut quales nos eis praebere debeamus ex illorum merito qui eas suggerunt considerare possimus, ut efficiamur secundum praeceptum domini probabiles trapezitae.*

15 *PArch* 3,2,4.

be on the watch, for «the wiley serpent is ever at our heels ... you must always be on the watch for his heads – that is, the beginnings of your thoughts (*cogitationum principia*) – and bring them at once to your elder» (*Inst.* 4.XXXVII).¹⁶ Seneca too had distinguished the beginning of the emotion from the fully formed emotion (*adfectus*) and indeed using the same word *principia* (*nec affectus sed principia proludentia affectibus*).

The same image of the serpent's head and reference to the beginnings of evil thoughts (*cogitarum malarum principia*) is found in regard to the spirit of fornication in *Inst.* 6.XIII.1, where it is illustrated with an allusion to Psalm 136: 9:

It behooves us as well to destroy the sinners in our land – namely, our fleshly feelings – on the morning of their birth, as they emerge, and, while they are still young, to dash the children of Babylon against the rock. Unless they are killed at a very tender age they will, with our acquiescence, rise up to our harm as stronger adults, and they will certainly not be overcome without great pain and effort.¹⁷

This interpretation of Ps 136:9 goes back to Origen, who had interpreted the infants of Babylon to mean «confused thoughts caused by evil» (συγχυτικοὶ λογισμοὶ οἱ ἀπὸ κακίας).¹⁸ A variant of this interpretation is given by Origen in a homily on Joshua where the rock is interpreted to mean Christ (1 Cor 10:4). In Rufinus' Latin translation of the homily, the thoughts are *cogitationes malae*.¹⁹

In Eusebius' version of this interpretation the children become the «seeds of evil» (τὰ σπέρματα τῆς κακίας) and the «beginnings of confused errors» (τὰς

16 *Inst.* 4.XXXVII: *Quod ut possis implere, tu eius capita, id est cogitationum principia semper obserua, ad seniore[m] scilicet mox ea deferens. Ita enim discas pernicio[s]a initia eius conterere, si nil ex eis seniori tuo erubueris reuelare.*

17 *Inst.* 6.XIII.2: *Emergentes etiam peccatores terrae nostrae, id est sensus carnales, in matutinis sui ortus nos oportet extinguere, et dum adhuc paruuli sunt adlidere filios Babylonis ad petram, qui nisi dum tenerrimi sunt fuerint enecati, adulti per coniuuentiam in perniciem nostram ualidiores insurgunt aut certe non sine magno gemitu ac labore uincentur.*

18 *CCels* 7,22: «The infants of Babylon, which means confusion, are the confused thoughts caused by evil which have just been implanted and are growing up in the soul. The man who takes hold of them, so that he breaks their heads by the firmness and solidity of the word, is dashing the infants of Babylon against the rock; and on this account he becomes blessed». (ORIGEN, *Contra Celsum*, tr. H. Chadwick, Cambridge 1953, 413). «Νήπια» γὰρ «Βαβυλῶνος», ἐρμηνευομένης συγχύσεως, οἱ ἄρτι ὑποφύομενοι καὶ ἀνατέλλοντες ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ εἰσιν συγχυτικοὶ λογισμοὶ οἱ ἀπὸ κακίας· ὧν ὁ κρατῶν, ὡς καὶ τῷ στερεῷ καὶ εὐτόνῳ τοῦ λόγου προσρῆξαι αὐτῶν τὰς κεφαλὰς, ἐδαφίζει «τὰ νήπια» τῆς «Βαβυλῶνος» «πρὸς τὴν πέτραν», γινόμενος διὰ τοῦτο «μακάριος». A variant of this interpretation is given by Origen in *HomJos* 15,3 where the rock is interpreted to mean Christ (1 Cor 10:4).

19 GCS 30 (*Origenes Werke* 7), 387

ἀρχὰς τῶν συγχυτικῶν ἁμαρτημάτων).²⁰ For Hilary of Poitiers, who was certainly following Origen, the children become «the tender vices of the body» (*tenera adhuc corporis uitia*).²¹ And in the Latin commentary transmitted under the name of Jerome, which may be his translation of Origen, the thoughts come to be identified with concupiscence.²² Finally we have two versions of Evagrius' comment on the psalm verse. In his *Scholia on Psalms*, the children are base or bad thoughts (τὰ φαῦλα νοήματα).²³ In the *Ad monachos* they are evil thoughts (λογισμοὺς κακοῦς).²⁴ In this exegetical tradition, the *propatheiai*, now identified with thoughts, become in effect incipient passion «related to its mature form as child to adult». The notion of an involuntary response to external stimuli described by Seneca has become blurred.

Cassian uses a number of other terms to describe the first movements including *commotio*, *suggestio*, *incitamentum* and *semina*. All of these are found also in Origen's treatment of the *propatheiai*, at least as found in Rufinus' translation of the *Peri Archon*.²⁶ One passage from Origen in particular needs to be cited. He is clear that «the acts that arise clearly from the necessities of the body» (hunger, thirst, sexual desire) are not caused by the devil. Then he states that «the

20 EUSEBIUS, *Comm. Ps.* 136: Βαβυλῶνος δὲ νήπια τὰ σπέρματα τῆς κακίας, καὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς τῶν συγχυτικῶν ἁμαρτημάτων, οὐκ ἂν ἁμάρτοις εἰπὼν· ἃ δὴ τῷ λόγῳ τῷ σωτηρίῳ (ἡ πέτρα γὰρ ἦν ὁ Χριστὸς) ἀναιρεῖν πρὸς τὸ μὴ αὔξειν, μηδὲ εἰς ἔργα προέρχεσθαι σπουδάσει ὁ ἐν τούτοις μακαριζόμενος.

21 CSEL 22,734: *in quem beatus est, qui filiae Babylonis paruulos, id est tenera adhuc corporis uitia allidet et conteret.*

22 CCL 78,298: *Paruuli dicuntur cogitationes. Verbu gratiae, uidi mulierem, concupiui eam : statim si non abscidero concupiscentiam illam, et sicut pedem tennuero, et allisero ad petram donec parua est concupiscentia, non potest postea abscidi quando creuerit. Beatus ergo est qui statim abscidit, et allidit eam ad petram. Petra autem Xpistus est.*

23 Ὅσοι κατὰ τὴν διδασκαλίαν τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὰ φαῦλα νοήματα διαφθεῖρουσι τῆς ψυχῆς, οὗτοι τὰ νήπια Βαβυλῶνος ἐδαφίζουσι πρὸς τὴν πέτραν (PG 12,1660, l.3.). The text is attributed to Origen in the catenae, but the attribution is regarded as dubious. It is attributed to Evagrius by M.-J. Rondeau, based on MS. *Vaticanus Graecus* 754 (10th cent., 395 ff., *Psalmi et cantica cum catena*, Karo-Lietzman Cat. pp. 39-41). A «key» which facilitates extraction of this collation from published sources is found in Rondeau's article, «Le commentaire sur les Psaumes d'Évagre le Pontique», *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 26 (1960) 307-348. See http://www.ldysinger.com/evagrius/08_Psalms/00a_start.htm.

24 Ὁ διαφθεῖρων λογισμοὺς κακοῦς ἀπὸ καρδίας αὐτοῦ ὁμοίός ἐστι τῷ ἐδαφίζοντι τὰ νήπια αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὴν πέτραν. H. GRESSMANN, *Nonnenspiegel und Mönchsspiegel des Evagrius Pontikos* (TU 39.4), Leipzig 1913, 153-165.

25 LAYTON, *Didymus the Blind*, 131.

26 *PArch* 3,2,2 and 3,2,4.

same process of reasoning can be applied to the rest of the natural emotions (*ceteris naturalibus motibus*), such as covetousness, anger, sorrow or any others whatever». He concludes from this:

The fact is therefore clear that, just as in regard to things that are good the mere human will is by itself incapable of completing the good act - for this is in all cases brought to perfection by divine help – so also in regard to things of the opposite kind we derive the beginnings (*initia*) and what we may call the seeds of sin (*semina peccatorum*) from those desires which are given to us naturally for our use.²⁷

It would appear from Origen's analysis that these desires belong to human nature as such and that all who are human experience them.²⁸ Cassian's use of the same terminology seems to suggest agreement.

At this point, however, the matter becomes complicated by the requirements of Christology. Cassian must deny that Christ experienced these *semina* or at least some of them. In the context of a discussion of the relationship between gluttony and fornication, Serapion explains that Jesus Christ, though tempted «in every respect as we are» was «without sin» (Heb 4:15). That means he was without the «contagion of this passion» because «in his regard there was nothing like our own insemination and conception»²⁹ for he was born of the Virgin Mary.³⁰ He possessed the incorruptible image and likeness of God. The vice of concupiscence entered the scene only after the first sin of gluttony when the image and likeness was violated.³¹ Serapion explains:

27 *PArch* 3,2,2. The English translation is from ORIGEN, *On First Principles*, tr. G. W. Butterworth, New York 1966, 214.

28 Elsewhere Origen insists that concupiscence and wrath are natural and necessary. Commenting on Gen 1:29-30 he says: «But allegorically the vegetation of the earth and its fruit which is granted to men for food can be understood of the bodily affections. For example, anger and concupiscence are offshoots of the body. The fruit of this offshoot, that is, the work common to us who are rational and to the beasts of the earth» (*HomGn* 1,17). Commenting on Gen 6:19-20 and the phrase «two by two», he states: «I think that concupiscence and wrath, which are in every soul, are necessarily said to be unclean in the sense that they serve to make man sin. But in the sense that neither succession of posterity is renewed without concupiscence nor can any correction or discipline exist without anger, they are said to be necessary and must be preserved» (*HomGn* 2,6). The English translation is from ORIGEN, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, tr. R.E. Heine (FC 71), Washington, D.C. 1982.

29 *Conl.* 5.V.

30 *Conl.* 5.VI.3.

31 *Conl.* 5.VI.1.

The devil tempted him, then, only with the vices by which he had also deceived that first man, conjecturing that, as a man, he could be mocked in other ways too if he saw that he was seduced by the things with which he had overthrown the first man. But he was unable to inflict him with a second disease, sprouting from the root of the principal vice that served as a source, since he was defeated in the first battle. He saw that he had not been touched at all by the first stages of this sickness and that it was too much to expect the fruit of sin from him, since he discerned that he had never possessed its seeds and roots (*semina vel radices*).³²

Here the whole context has been changed by the development of the doctrine of original sin, or perhaps more accurately by the Fall. Concupiscence no longer belongs to the natural motions, as it seemed to for Origen, but is the result of the Fall. Preceding this passage Serapion had explained that even Adam would not have been subjected to fornication if he had conquered gluttony and he invokes Rom 8:3 «in the likeness of sinful flesh» to distance Christ from this temptation observing:

Although he had real flesh, which is to say that he ate and drank and slept and was also really fastened by nails, he did not have real sin contracted through wrongdoing (*praevaricatione*) but only what seemed to be such. For he did not experience the burning pricks of carnal desire that even arise when we do not want them, due to nature's action, but he experienced a certain similarity through participating in our nature.³³

Here the doctrine of the Fall has intervened to redefine the concept of nature.³⁴ It would be tempting to attribute these distinctions to the context of the Pelagian controversy and the development of the Augustinian concept of original sin. However, already in Origen we find that the sphere of sex is the privileged area for the manifestation of the state of impurity that characterises

32 *Conl.* 5.VI.5.

33 *Conl.* 5.VI.3-4: *Quia, cum esset in eo uera caro, manducans scilicet et bibens et dormiens, clauorum quoque confixionem in ueritate suscipiens, peccatum eius quod praeuaricatione contraxit uerum non habuit sed imaginarium.* 4. *Non enim ignitos aculeos concupiscentiae carnalis expertus est, qui etiam nolentibus nobis natura iam administrante consurgunt, sed huius quandam similitudinem naturam participando susceperit.*

34 This is quite clear from a preceding passage which describes the Fall in terms of the violation of «the image and likeness»: *Conl.* 5.VI.1: *In illis enim passionibus etiam ipse temptari debuit incorruptam imaginem dei ac similitudinem possidens, in quibus et Adam temptatus est, cum adhuc in illa inuiolata dei imagine perduraret, hoc est gastrimargia, cenodoxia, superbia, non in quibus post praeuaricationem mandati imagine dei ac similitudine uiolata suo iam uitio deuolutus inuoluitur.*

human existence. Only Mary constituted a «mystical exception» because she conceived not from human seed, but from the power of the Holy Spirit. Consequently Christ also is the only one to enter the world through generation not contaminated by his mother, whereas everyone conceived according to the natural laws «can be said to be contaminated in his father and mother».³⁵

The Pelagian controversy, however, clearly affected the notion of the *pro-patheiai* (now become thoughts) in another way. It was now necessary to deny vigorously that man could reach a state of sinlessness. Cassian returns to the question of the sinlessness of Christ in Conference 22 and his existence «in the likeness of sinful flesh» as an occasion to insist that no one else can say that he is without sin, for that is proper to Christ alone.³⁶ Even holy men are not immune from guilt as Proverbs 24:16 («the righteous person falls seven times») indicates, although they may not cease to be righteous. The conference giver, Theonas, explains:

For it is one thing to commit a deadly sin and it is another to anticipate it in thought, which is not without sinfulness; or to offend by the error of ignorance or forgetfulness or by a heedless word glibly uttered; or by the vice of faithlessness, to doubt something for a moment, due to an inner thought; or to be moved by the subtle titillation of vainglory; or to fall back for a short while from the heights of perfection, due to some demand of nature.³⁷

Further on he invokes Paul in Romans 7 saying, «The Apostle Paul knew that the immeasurable abyss of purity could not be penetrated by man because of the resistance of seething and emotional thoughts».³⁸ It would appear that the thoughts are inevitably sinful in some respect. The clear distinction announced

35 *HomLev* XII,4. See the detailed discussion in G. SFAMENI GASPARO, *Enkrateia e antropologia. Le motivazioni protologiche della continenza* (SEAug 20), Roma 1984, 184-194. For Origen there is a double impurity, that of the corporeal condition (result of the first fall) and the impurity of sexual relations due to the transgression of Adam and Eve and the consequent post-lapsarian institution of matrimony.

36 *Conl.* 22.XII.3.

37 *Conl.* 22.XIII.2. *Aliud enim est admittere mortale peccatum et aliud est cogitatione, quae peccato non caret, praeveniri, uel ignorantiae aut obliuionis errore aut facilitate, otiosi sermonis offendere, aut ad punctum infidelitatis uitio interna teoria aliquid haesitare, aut necessitate naturae aliquantis per a summa perfectionis recidere.*

38 *Conl.* 22.XIV.1. *Nam cum apostolus Paulus inaestimabilem abyssum puritatis resistentibus cogitationum aestibus penetrari ab homine non posse cognoscens diu uelut per profunda iactatus ante dixisset.*

early on between the involuntary first movements and emotion or passion has been blurred.

Another departure from the Stoic position may be seen in Cassian's teaching that anger can be usefully directed against our own thoughts or temptations: «Yet we have a function for anger placed quite appropriately within us, and for this purpose alone it is useful and beneficial for us to take it up – when we wax indignant against the wanton movements of our own heart and are angered at things that we are ashamed to do or say in the sight of human beings but that have found their way into the recesses of our heart ...». Cassian says that this is the meaning of the psalm verse «Be angry, and do not sin» (Ps 4:5) and concludes: «So we are commanded to get angry in a healthy way, at ourselves and at the evil suggestions that make an appearance, and not to sin by letting them have a harmful effect».³⁹ In Stoic terminology this is the equivalent of saying that it is permissible to direct a passion against a *propatheia*. In other words it is incomprehensible. Here Cassian appears to be reflecting Evagrius who had stated in the *Praktikos* that the «nature of the irascible part (of the soul) is to fight against demons and to strive against every pleasure».⁴⁰ In another work he states that the «usefulness of the irascible part (*thumos*) is to oppose with hatred the serpent ...».⁴¹ Evagrius is basing himself on the threefold division of the soul into the rational part, the irascible part and the concupiscible part, a division that is ultimately of Platonic (*Republic* 580) inspiration, but which he probably found developed in later scholastic texts.⁴² Seneca, on the other hand, would not have

39 *Inst.* 8.VII-VIII: *Habemus sane irae ministerium satis commode nobis insertum, ad quod solum eam recipere utile nobis est ac salubre, cum contra lasciuiantes cordis nostri motus indignantes infremimus et ea, quae agere confundimur coram hominibus uel proloqui, in latebras ascendisse nostri pectoris indignamur, angelorum scilicet ac Dei ipsius praesentiam ubique et omnia penetrantis oculumque eius tota formidine tremescentes, quem nequaquam possunt conscientiae nostrae latere secreta.* VIII. *Vel certe cum contra hanc ipsam iram, cur nobis aduersus fratrem inrepserit, commouemur et irati letales instigationes eius extrudimus nec in adytis pectoris nostri noxias eam latebras habere permittimus. Taliter nos irasci etiam ille propheta docet, qui in tantum hanc e suis abegerat sensibus, ut ne inimicis quidem propriis et quidem a Deo sibi traditis maluerit reddere talionem irascimni, inquit, et nolite peccare.* VIII. *Iubemur itaque irasci salubriter, sed nobismet ipsis ac suggestionibus ascendentibus prauis, et non peccare, ad effectum scilicet eas noxium perducentes.*

40 *Praktikos*, 24: Φύσις θυμοῦ τὸ τοῖς δαίμοσι μάχεσθαι καὶ ὑπὲρ ἡστινοσοῦν ἡδονῆς ἀγωνίζεσθαι.

41 *Tractatus ad Eulogium* 11: ἐν τούτῳ γὰρ ἡ χρῆσις τοῦ θυμοῦ, ἐν τῷ κατὰ τὴν ἔχθραν ἀντιμάχεσθαι τῷ ὀφεί. PG 79, 1105, line 42.

42 See EVAGRE LE PONTIQUE, *Traité pratique* 2, ed. A. Guillaumont - C. Guillaumont (SCh 171), Paris 1971, 681-683.

granted that anger has any usefulness at all. Virtue cannot be aided by a vice.⁴³ Nor would he allow that anger could be used against oneself.⁴⁴

To summarize: in Cassian we find the traditional Latin terminology for the concept of *propatheia*, but the concept itself has been considerably altered by being inserted in the context of the biblical category of original sin, by the requirements of Christology, by the now traditional interpretation of Psalm 136, and finally by the context of the Pelgian controversy and the question of sinlessness. Nevertheless, in another context, Cassian could insist on the ability of the ambidextrous man to resist the *propatheiai*. He describes the left hand of the ambidextrous person in dramatic terms:

He also has a left hand when he is involved in the turmoil of trials; when the desires of his flesh are inflamed by seething emotions and impulses; when the fire of aggravations enkindles the fury of his wrath; when he is struck by the arrogance of pride or vainglory; when he is depressed by a deathdealing sadness; when he is disturbed by the ploys and the attack of acedia; and when, in the absence of any spiritual warmth, he is dulled by a kind of tepidity and irrational mournfulness, so that not only is he deserted by good and warm thoughts but psalmody, prayer, reading, and the solitude of his cell terrify him, and every virtuous practice takes on a certain unbearable and darkly loathsome quality.⁴⁵

Since the ambidextrous person does not give into to any of these assaults, they must be only *propatheiai* and not passions, even though they are experienced as strong emotions.⁴⁶

43 SENECA, *Ira* I,9.

44 SENECA, *Ira* I,16.

45 *Conl.* 6.X.3: *Habet similiter et sinistram, cum temptationum turbinibus implicatur, cum ad desideria carnis incentiuorum aestibus inflammatur, cum ad iracundiae furorem perturbationum igne succenditur, eum superbiae seu cenodoxiae elatione pulsatur, cum tristitia mortem operante deprimitur, cum machinis acediae et inpugnatione concutitur cumque omni spiritali feruore subtracto quodam tepore atque irrorationabili maerore torpescit, ut non solum cogitationibus rectis ac feruentibus deseratur, sed etiam psalmus, oratio, lectio, remotio cellae simul horreant et intolerabili quodam tetroque fastidio uniuersa sordeant instrumenta uirtutum, quibus cum pulsatur monachus, sinistris partibus se cognoscat urgeri.*

46 For more on the ambidextrous man, see the essay «Job and Paul. Philosophy and Exegesis in Cassian's Sixth Conference», in this volume, 365-390.

MONASTIC *XENITEIA*¹

We are, most if not all of us here today, *xenoi*, strangers in this land. It is not the land of our birth. Actually this has been the case from the beginning of monasticism in the Holy Land in the fourth century. The vast majority of the monks and nuns here has always been composed of foreigners speaking many different languages. By the latter part of the fourth century there were Greek speakers, Syriac speakers, and Latin speakers. Many came as pilgrims and decided to stay. Writing about the year 400 from Bethlehem, Jerome says with a rhetorical flourish that «everyday we receive in Jerusalem troops of monks coming from India, Persia, Ethiopia ... Armenians, Huns, Goths, Scyths».² In the late fourth and early fifth centuries Jerusalem breathed a cosmopolitan atmosphere. We, who belong to the Latin Patriarchate, can see our forebearers in Melania the Elder and Rufinus on the Mount of Olives, Jerome and Paula in Bethlehem and we must not forget John Cassian, who spent three years in Bethlehem before going in search of better forms of monasticism in Egypt. All of these people were also multilingual. Writing in the mid-sixth century, Cyril of Scythopolis depicts all the founding heroes of monasticism in Palestine as natives of other countries. Euthymius and John the Hesychast came from Armenia, Sabas, Theodosius and Theognis from Cappadocia, Kyriakos from Greece, and Abraamios from Syria. All but one of the early disciples of Euthymius came from outside of Palestine, from Cappadocia, Armenia and the Sinai.³ The monasticism of Palestine was a monasticism of *xenoi*, foreigners, a feature that distinguished it from the monasticism of Egypt and Syria, where the vast majority of the monks and nuns were natives.⁴ As one writer has put it recently, «the Christian elite in Palestine was a society of im-

1 The present essay was originally given as a conference in French for the Benedictines of the Holy Land, at Dormititon Abbey, Jerusalem, September 16, 2010.

2 JEROME, *Epist.* 107,2.

3 CYRIL OF SCYTHOPOLIS, *The Lives of the Monks of Palestine* (Cistercian Studies 114), tr. R.M. Price, Kalamazoo, Mich. 1991.

4 R.L. WILKEN, *The Land Called Holy*, New Haven 1992, 156-157. For the history of monasticism in Palestine, see also: L. PERRONE, «Monasticism in the Holy Land. From the Beginnings to the Crusaders», *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 45 (1995) 31-63; D.J. CHITTY, *The Desert a City. An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism under the Christian Empire*, Crestwood, N.Y. 1977.

migrants, who had come to the Holy Land to practice there the new monastic virtue of *xeniteia*, i.e., learning to become a stranger on earth». ⁵ Whether or not *xeniteia* should be described as a virtue is questionable, but Guillaumont does include it among the essential characteristics of ancient monasticism. ⁶

The attentive reader will have noted that we have not yet attempted to give a precise meaning or a translation of the word *xeniteia*. Just a little over forty years ago, Guillaumont published an article intitled: «Exile as a form of asceticism in ancient monasticism». ⁷ He noted the presence of the word in other languages including Coptic, Syriac and in Latin as *peregrinatio*. He observed also that it seemed to be of military origin, and that, in the monastic literature, «it designates the process by which the monk leaves his homeland to live in a country where he will always feel like a stranger». ⁸ But why does the monk do this? What is the motivation?

Guillaumont assemble a large number of texts in which the idea of *xeniteia* can be found. The motivation offered in these texts for the practice is, however, quite varied. In his famous letter to Heliodorus, written in 376/377, ⁹ St. Jerome, trying to persuade his friend to join him in the desert of Chalcis, insists that it is impossible to engage in spiritual combat in one's own country. There is no peace to be found there, and where there is no peace, the spirit is often diverted from its purpose. Guillaumont notes the presence of personal items in Jerome's analysis, but he concludes that «in this analysis there is something true: the monk, to persist in his purpose, needs quiet, *quies*, which in Greek is called ἡσυχία, and it is *hesychia* that *xeniteia* will provide for him». ¹⁰ The motif of *xeniteia* is attached not only to the Holy Land, but also to Egypt, where many foreigners went to pursue the monastic life. Among the most famous of these was Evagrius, who wrote:

If you are unable to cultivate stillness (ἡσυχάσαι) with ease in your regions, direct your purpose towards voluntary exile (ξενιτεία) and apply your thinking to this with diligence. Be like a very good businessman, evaluating everything

5 G. STROUMSA, «Religious Contacts in Byzantine Palestine», *Numen* 36 (1989) 17.

6 A. GUILLAUMONT, «Esquisse d'une phénoménologie du monachisme», *Numen* 25 (1978) 40-51.

7 A. GUILLAUMONT, «Le dépaysement comme forme d'ascèse dans le monachisme ancien», in *Aux origines du monachisme chrétien. Pour une phénoménologie du monachisme* (Spiritualité Orientale 30), Bégrolles en Mauges 1979, 90-116.

8 GUILLAUMONT, «Le dépaysement», 90.

9 JEROME, *Epist.* 14.

10 GUILLAUMONT, «Le dépaysement», 91.

with regard to the cultivation of stillness and always retaining those things that are peaceful and useful in this regard (cf. 1 Thes 5: 21). Indeed, I tell you, love voluntary exile (ξενιτεία), for it separates you from the circumstances of your own country and allows you to enjoy the unique benefit of practising stillness (ήσυχία).¹¹

One could easily multiply quotations that combine *xeniteia* with *hesychia*.

Among other motivations noted by Guillaumont, that of avoiding familiarity should be mentioned. John Climacus defined *xeniteia* as «a disposition without familiarity».¹² *Xeniteia* is, in fact, the opposite of *parrhesia* (παρρησία), which is the ease, familiarity, or the carelessness which characterizes the behavior of one who feels at home or among his own. Taken in the pejorative sense, the word often refers to familiarity or freedom with language. Abba Sisoës could give this definition: «*xeniteia* is when a man controls his tongue». To Longinus, who said: «I want to live in *xeniteia*», Abba Loukios responded, «If you do not control your tongue, you cannot be a stranger (ξένος) in any place you go, so control your tongue here, and you will be abroad».¹³ As Guillaumont observed, «This leads to an entirely spiritual and internalized conception of *xeniteia*».¹⁴

Let us return now for a moment to the Holy Land and the figure of Melania the Elder. In his *Lausiac History*, Palladius says that Melania lived thirty-seven years in *xeniteia* (ξενιτεύσασα) giving assistance to churches, monasteries, foreigners and prisoners.¹⁵ Some translators have understood this to mean that she spent thirty-seven years abroad. But this is impossible because Palladius says clearly that Melania spent twenty-seven years in Jerusalem, where she founded a monastery and led a community of fifty virgins.¹⁶ Abbot Butler concluded that Palladius had made a mistake, assigning a certain period of time (that passed in Jerusalem), to what was in fact the entire period of her ascetic life, that is,

11 *Rerum monachalium rationes* VI: Εἰ μὴ δύνασαι ῥαδίως ἡσυχάσαι ἐν τοῖς σοῖς μέρεσι, δός σου ἐπὶ ξενιτείαν τὴν πρόθεσιν, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτην αὐτὴν κατάσπευδέ σου τὸν λογισμόν. Γενοῦ καθάπερ τις πραγματευτὴς ἄριστος, τὰ πάντα πρὸς ἡσυχίαν δοκιμάζων, καὶ τὰ πρὸς ταύτην ἡσυχὰ καὶ χρήσιμα διὰ πάντων κατέχων. Πλὴν λέγω σοι, ξενιτείαν ἀγάπα· ἀπαλλάττει γάρ σε τῶν κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν χώραν περιστάσεων, καὶ τῆς κατὰ τὴν ἡσυχίαν ὠφελείας μόνον ἀπολαύειν ποιεῖ. (PG 40,1257). The English translation is from: EVAGRIUS OF PONTUS, *The Greek Ascetic Corpus* (Oxford Early Christian Studies), tr. R. Sinkewicz, Oxford 2003, 7.

12 GUILLAUMONT, «Le dépaysement», 112.

13 *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Longinus 1, PG 65, 256C.

14 GUILLAUMONT, «Le dépaysement», 113.

15 PALLADIUS, *Hist. Laus.* 54,2.

16 PALLADIUS, *Hist. Laus.* 46, 5.

thirty-seven years. Bartelink, however, concluded that it was no error, but rather exactly what the word meant at the time when Palladius wrote. Therefore, he translates it as: «she lived thirty-seven years separated from the world».¹⁷ How did the word acquire this broader and more spiritual meaning?

To understand this meaning, it will be necessary to refer to the exegetical tradition concerning Genesis 12, the call of Abraham. However, it is worthwhile to remember first that Melania, Palladius and Rufinus (of whom Palladius said you cannot find a man wiser and more modest) all belonged to what has been called the erudite monasticism of the fourth century. Palladius wrote of Melania that she was a woman of great culture and filled with the love of the Scriptures. She had read all the old commentaries on the Scriptures (Palladius mentions the names of Origen, Gregory, Stephen, and Pierius Basil).¹⁸ Rufinus was the most important translator of the works of Origen and of the other Greek fathers of the fourth century. Palladius himself was well acquainted with the exegetical tradition.

We must trace now the history of the interpretation of the migration of Abraham. Before we attempt to trace this development, however, it should be noted that Christians did not come to Palestine to take up the monastic life because of an abstract idea of *xeniteia*. They came rather because it was the place where Jesus had lived and died. Monasticism did not begin in Palestine, but it acquired a particular flavor, so to speak, here because of the association of the land with the Incarnation of the Son of God. The land was a kind of extension of the Incarnation or one vast relic to be venerated, as it is to this day.

However, it was precisely to this land that Abraham had emigrated; he was, therefore a fascinating figure. The theme of *xeniteia* is found in connection with the call of Abraham in Genesis 12 already in fourth century monastic texts. Jerome writes to Marcella to encourage her to come to Palestine, saying, «What are God's first words to Abraham? Go out, he says, from your land and from your kindred, and go to the land I will show you» (*Epist.* 46,2).¹⁹ Here the text of Genesis 12 is cited with a literal application to the land of Palestine. However, by this time the text had already played an important role in the development of the theme of *xeniteia* in a non-literal sense. Antony the Great had already cited Abraham as an example for those who take up the monastic life:

17 See PALLADIO, *La storia lausiaca*, ed. G.J.M. Bartelink, Milano 1974, 247: «Nei trentasei anni che visse separata dal mondo» and the lengthy explanatory note on p. 387.

18 PALLADIUS, *Hist. Laus.* 55,3.

19 WILKEN, *The Land Called Holy*, 123. See also JEROME, *Epist.* 58,2, and CHITTY, *The Desert a City*, 14.

I believe that the souls, whether male or female, whom God in his mercy has assembled by his own Word, are of three kinds.

Some were reached by the Word of God through the law of promise and the discernment of the good inherent in them from their first formation. They did not hesitate but followed it readily as did Abraham, our father. Since he offered himself in love through law of promise, God appeared to him, saying: «Go from your country and your kindred and from your father's house to the land that I will show you». And he went without hesitating at all, but being ready for his calling. This is the model for the beginning of this way of life. It still persists in those who follow this pattern. Wherever and whenever souls endure and bow to it they easily attain the virtues, since their hearts are ready to be guided by the Spirit of God.²⁰

The Christian interpretation of the figure of Abraham and the call of Abraham begins of course in the New Testament, where Abraham plays a considerable role. It was essential for Paul to claim descent from Abraham for all Christians. It was through faith that Abraham was justified and it is through faith that Christians become his descendants: «Thus Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” Realize then that it is those who have faith who are children of Abraham», Paul insists in Galatians 3:6-7. And he concludes his argumentation: «And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendant, heirs according to the promise» (Gal 3:29). Paul argues in a similar way in the letter to the Romans 4:9,16: «Now we assert that “faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness” ... For this reason, it depends on faith, so that it may be a gift, and the promise may be guaranteed to all his descendants, not to those who only adhere to the law but to those who follow the faith of Abraham, who is the father of all of us». But it is especially in the Letter to the Hebrews that not only is Abraham's faith stressed, but his obedience in responding to God's call to leave his country and become a sojourner: «By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; he went out, not knowing where he was to go. By faith he sojourned in the promised land as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs of the same promise» (Heb 11:8-9). The author concludes somewhat triumphantly:

20 Letter 1: S. RUBENSON, *The Letters of St. Antony. Origenist Theology, Monastic Tradition and the Making of a Saint* (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity), Minneapolis 1995, 197.

All these died in faith. They did not receive what had been promised but saw it and greeted it from afar and acknowledged themselves to be strangers and aliens on earth (ξένοι καὶ παρεπίδημοί εισιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς), for those who speak thus show that they are seeking a homeland ... But now they desire a better homeland, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them (Heb 11:13-16).

It has often been suggested that, if the author of the Letter to the Hebrews was not actually influenced by the writings of his older contemporary, Philo of Alexandria, he was at least influenced by the Jewish Hellenistic milieu of that city, where the Scriptures had been interpreted figuratively and in a philosophical key for as much as two centuries. The most important representative of this tradition was Philo of Alexandria, who was to have enormous influence on the development of Christian exegesis and Christian spirituality. By the end of the fifth century Philo was not only regarded as a Christian, but the pieces of interpretation ascribed to him in the *Catena* are attributed to Philo the Bishop.

Philo was exceptionally well acquainted with the Greek philosophical tradition and saw no difficulty with interpreting the Scriptures in the light of this tradition. Modern scholars tend to speak of how Philo and the early Christian writers used philosophy to interpret Scripture, but these authors would have found the notion of «use» rather strange. Philo and most of these writers thought that Moses had lived much earlier than the Greek philosophers and that the latter had borrowed their ideas from him. Allegorical interpretation could disclose the philosophical content lying beneath the surface of the text.

Philo interpreted the figure of Abraham as the intellect, the mind, that is seeking wisdom. In fact the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob represent three aspects of the search for wisdom, as Philo explains in his work *On Abraham*:

For the holy word seems to be searching into types of soul, all of them of high worth, one which pursues the good through teaching, one through nature and one through practice. The first called Abraham, the second Isaac and the third Jacob, are symbols of virtue acquired respectively by teaching, nature and practice.²¹

Allegorically understood, they represent not three distinct persons but three aspects of the quest for wisdom, for God, that may be found in the same per-

21 *Abr.* XI,52. The English translations of Philo are from *Philo 4 and 6* (LCL 261, 289), tr. F.H. Colson - G.H. Whitaker, Cambridge, Mass. 1932-1935.

son. This is the interpretive context for explaining the call and the migration of Abraham described in Genesis 12:1: «The LORD said to Abram: Go forth from your land, your relatives, and from your father's house to a land that I will show you». Philo says that Abraham responded at once and he describes eloquently what that entailed on a literal level:

And so taking no thought for anything, either for his fellow-clansmen, or wardsmen, or schoolmates, or comrades, or blood relations on father's or mother's side, or country, or ancestral customs, or community of nurture or home life, all of them ties possessing a power to allure and attract which it is hard to throw off, he followed a free and unfettered impulse and departed with all speed first from Chaldea, a land at that time blessed by fortune and at the height of its prosperity, and migrated to Haran (Gen. 11,31); then not long afterwards he left this too for another place (Gen. 12,19)...²²

These immigrations, says Philo, were performed on the literal level by a wise man, «but according to the laws of allegory by a virtue-loving soul in its search for the true God».²³ Abraham abandons the study of astronomy to search for God. It is a moral quest. In his work entitled Concerning emigration, Philo explains that God wished to purify the human soul and begins by giving it a point of departure. Each of the phrases «your land», «your relatives», and «from your father's house» receives a specific meaning. He explains:

God, begins the carrying out of His will to cleanse man's soul by giving it a starting-point for full salvation in its removal out of three localities, namely, body, sense-perception, and speech. «Land» or «country» is a symbol of the body, «kindred» of sense-perception, «fathers' house» of speech.²⁴

Further on he explains that the command «Depart out of these» means:

Make thyself a stranger to them in judgement and purpose; let none of them cling to thee; rise superior to them all; they are thy subjects, never treat them as sovereign lords; thou art a king, school thyself once and for all to rule, not to be ruled; evermore be coming to know thyself, as Moses teaches thee in many places, saying «Give heed to thyself» (Ex 34:12).²⁵

22 *Abr.* XIV,67.

23 *Abr.* XV,68.

24 *Migr.* I, 2.

25 *Migr.* II,7-8.

This passage is of great importance for the history of monastic and Christian spirituality, for in it Philo connects the most famous of all sayings attributed to the Delphic oracle and central to the Greek philosophic tradition at least from the time of Socrates, «Know thyself», to a Scriptural text, Exod 34:12: «Mind yourself» (πρόσεχε σεαυτῷ). This connection will be developed by many later Christian writers, including notably Origen and Basil the Great. Abraham thus becomes the symbol of the mind seeking spiritual progress through the pursuit of self-knowledge.²⁶ His *xeniteia*, his *peregrinatio*, is a spiritual quest.

Philo interpreted Abraham's move from Harran to the land of Chanaan as a second move or moment in his peregrination and, using the instrument of etymology, arrived at an allegorical interpretation. Harran, he says, «in the our (Greek) language, means «holes,» a symbol for the seats of our senses through which each of them naturally peers as through orifices to apprehend what belongs to it».²⁷ Philo combines literal and figurative interpretation. The second migration, he writes, «which the man of worth undertakes, again in obedience to an oracle (λογίῳ), is not as before from state to state but into a desert country (Gen 12:9), in which he continued to wander, never complaining of the wandering or of the insecurity which it caused».²⁸ Abraham is both a man, an ancestor and he represents the human mind in search of God. As such he did not trust his senses, symbolized by Harran, but migrated in his spiritual quest to spiritual realms. Philo concludes:

So in both our expositions, the literal as applied to the man and the allegorical as applied to the soul, we have shown both man and soul to be worthy of our affection. We have shown how the man in obedience to divine commands (λογίοις), was drawn away from the stubborn hold of his associations and how the mind did not remain for ever deceived nor stand rooted in the realm of sense, nor suppose that the visible world was the Almighty and Primal God, but using its reason sped upwards and turned its gaze upon the intelligible order which is superior to the visible and upon Him, who is maker and ruler of both alike.²⁹

Philo asserts that he has received this interpretation from those versed in natural philosophy, who say that Abraham's name is a «figure for the good

26 For the history of this maxim in later literature, see P. COURCELLE, *Connais-toi toi-même I-3* (Études Augustiniennes), Paris 1974-1975.

27 *Abr.* XVI,72.

28 *Abr.* XVIII,85.

29 *Abr.* XVIII,88.

mind», and that what is intended to be indicated is «a good disposition of soul. The wife, they said, was virtue, her name being in Chaldean Sarah, but in our language a sovereign lady, because nothing is more sovereign or dominant than virtue».³⁰

Having established this basic symbolic equivalence between Abraham and the virtuous mind in search of wisdom, Philo is then able to interpret many other details of the biblical narrative in a similar allegorical sense. One of the most famous of these, taken over again by many Christian interpreters, is his explanation of the seemingly scandalous episode in Gen 16, where Sarah offers her servant Hagar to Abraham and suggests that he beget children by her, after living for ten years in the land of Canaan. The scandal is removed when one understands that Hagar represents the preliminary studies, the *enkuklikos paideia*, that is, grammar, mathematics, geometry, music, rhetoric, etc. The danger is that the mind will become enamoured of one of these and cease to pursue further progress, forgetting its true spouse, Sarah, who represents virtue and philosophy, the love of wisdom. Therefore Hagar must eventually be sent away. This too is part of Abraham's *xeniteia*.³¹

The first Christian writer after Philo and the New Testament authors to develop the theme of *xeniteia* was Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon in the latter part of the second century. In his work, *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, he wrote:

In process of time, that is to say, in the tenth generation after the Flood, Abraham appeared, seeking for the God who by the blessing of his ancestor was due and proper to him. And when, urged by the eagerness of his spirit, he went all about the world, searching where God is, and failed to find out; God took pity on him who alone was silently seeking Him; and He appeared to Abraham, making Himself known by the Word, as by a beam of light. For He spoke with him from heaven, and said to him: Go forth from your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house; and come into the land that I will show you, (Acts 7:3) and there dwell. And he believed the heavenly voice, being then of ripe age, even seventy years old, and having a wife; and together with her he went forth from Mesopotamia, taking with him Lot, the son of his brother who was dead.³²

30 *Abr.* XX,99.

31 *Congr.* XIV,71-79.

32 IRENAEUS, *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, ed. A. Robinson, London 1920, 91, section 24. The second person pronouns have been modernized.

With the phrase «the blessing of his ancestor», Irenaeus is making an allusion to the blessing received by Sem, whom he had already cited, saying «The power of the blessing lies in this, that the God and Lord of all should be to Shem a peculiar possession of worship. And the blessing extended and reached unto Abraham».³³ According to Emmanuel Lanne, Irenaeus wrote under the influence of Philo.³⁴ There are, in fact, several similarities. Like Philo, Irenaeus underscores the solitude of Abraham and the ardor of his soul. For him also the Abraham's move is more that of an inner quest than a physical change of place.³⁵ But Irenaeus introduces a new note, one specifically Christian. The oracle received by Abraham in the Philonian interpretation becomes the Word of God in the interpretation of Irenaeus. Therefore, comments Lanne, «It is every Christian who can identify with the figure of Abraham whose itinerary leads from a quest for God in solitude and silence, to the illumination of the Word who makes him go out of his land to follow after him, gives him citizenship with himself and makes him enjoy the promised kingdom». One could say that Irenaeus prepared the way for the monks.

With Didymus the Blind in the second half of the fourth century, the influence of Philo is even more evident. In his commentary on Genesis, he quotes Philo openly many times. However, he also adds texts from the gospels in his interpretation:

It is not by chance that God orders Abraham to leave his land and his relatives, but because he sees in him something that makes him worthy of being the object of divine concern, that is, faith in God. But it was not fitting that the one who had faith in God should remain among perverse people - the father of Abraham was in fact an idolater - because the company of the wicked often does harm to zealous men, especially to those whose zeal is new. That is why the Savior also proclaims: «If anyone wishes to follow me and does not hate his father, his brothers, his sisters, and even his wife and children, he cannot be my disciple».³⁶ The Lord did not say that in order to provoke hatred of ones relatives; but if one of them becomes an obstacle to virtue, it is necessary to hate him for virtue's sake. That is what the apostles did, who said, «Look, we have left everything in order to follow you» (Mark 10:28; cf. Matt 19:27.) Such is the order given

33 IRENAEUS, *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, 88, section 21.

34 E. LANNE, «La "xeniteia" d'Abraham dans l'oeuvre d'Irénée. Aux origines du thème monastique de la "peregrinatio"», *Irénikon* 47 (1974) 163-187.

35 LANNE, «La xeniteia d'Abraham», 184.

36 Cf. Luke 14:26; Matt 16:24.

now to the patriarch and God tells him that he will show him a land in which to live, that he will make of him a great nation, that he will bless and magnify his name.³⁷

Didymus also adopted Philo's interpretation of Haran and of the second stage of his migration: «[213] The anagogical sense contains much that is useful for whoever is capable of explaining it in this way. Haran, which is translated as "caverns" is a symbol for the senses, because the places of the senses are like caverns. God desires then that the saint go forth from sensible things to that which is higher». With regard to the story of Sarah and Hagar, Didymus mentions Pauls' interpretation (Gal 4:22-26) and then he explains:

Philo also used allegory here, but giving the text another application: he understood Sarah to represent perfect virtue and philosophy, because she was a free woman and wife, of noble birth and living with her husband in lawful union; [236] now virtue lives with the wise man in lawful union so that he can give birth from her to a divine progeny: «Wisdom,» in fact, «begets a man of discernment» ...

Sarah then is allegorically transposed into perfect and spiritual virtue; Hagar, the Egyptian slave symbolizes, according to Philo, the preliminary exercises (*progymnasmata*) and, in Paul, «the shadow». It is not possible, in fact, to understand anything of the spiritual or elevated ideas without the shadow that is the letter or without a preliminary study of the introductory sciences, for one must first bear children from inferior unions.³⁸

One could continue with the interpretations of Ambrose³⁹ and Cassian,⁴⁰ but we began this brief study of the history of the interpretation of Genesis 12 with Rufinus and Melania on the Mount of Olives and Palladius' observation that Melania lived thirty-seven years in *xeniteia*. When they left Rome to come

37 DIDYME L'AVEUGLE, *Sur la Genèse. Tome II (Sur Genèse V-XVII)*, ed. P. Nautin - L. Doutreleau (SCh 244), Paris 1978, 136-139, §209. The English translation is my own.

38 DIDYME L'AVEUGLE, *Sur la Genèse*, 202-205, §235-236.

39 AMBROSE, *Abr.* II,1,1-2. «Abraham represents the mind. In fact Abraham signifies passage. Therefore, in order that the mind, which in Adam had allowed itself to run to pleasure and to bodily attractions, should turn toward the ideal form of virtue, a wise man has been proposed to us as an example to imitate. Actually, Abraham in Hebrew signifies "father", in the sense that the mind, with the authority, the judgement, and the solicitude of a father, governs the entire person. This mind, then, was in Haran, that is in caverns, subject to the different passions. For this reason it is said, "Go from your country", that is from your body. From this land went forth the one whose homeland is in the heavens».

40 JOHN CASSIAN, *Conl.* 3.VI.

here, Ambrose was not yet bishop of Milan and Cassian had not yet arrived in Bethlehem. Is it possible that Rufinus and Melania were acquainted with this interpretation of the story of Abraham? In my opinion, it is very likely, because Rufinus spent several years in Alexandria studying with Didymus.

They did not come to Jerusalem in imitation of Abraham in the literal sense alone, but above all to continue a spiritual journey. Melania spent twenty-seven years in Jerusalem (or more exactly on the Mount of Olives), but thirty-seven years in *xeniteia*, that is, in her spiritual search.

And for us, the spiritual sons and daughters of Abraham and his descendants, the spiritual and monastic descendants of Melania the Elder and Rufinus, what can this tradition say to us today? It is not necessary to come to the Holy Land and live here in order to imitate Abraham spiritually, to live the monastic life. For us who have come, the literal migration is not enough. It is the spiritual migration that is essential. One must continue the search for self-knowledge «as long as one lives», says Philo. One must continue also the search for God, the contemplative life, the *bios theoretikos*, to use the Greek phrase. The relationship between the literal migration and the spiritual one could perhaps be compared to what Cassian calls the exterior man and the interior man. The external structure of the monastic life exists to encourage the interior life.

No, the external *xeniteia* is not sufficient. But, on the other hand, it is fitting to combine the external migration with the internal migration and it is good to pursue the spiritual migration in the land that recalls to us the story of Abraham and the promise «“And to your descendant”, who is Christ» (Gal 3:16), but we are also «Abraham’s descendant, heirs according to the promise» (Gal 3:29), as St. Paul says.

THE CONCEPT «CRITICAL». WHAT WOULD A CRITICAL HISTORY OF THEOLOGY BE LIKE?¹

As far as I have been able to determine, the first book to be published with the title «A Critical History» was that of Richard Simon, *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament*. The events surrounding its publication provide an insight into the development of critical history in general, as well as historical consciousness in the broad area of theology including the history of the interpretation of Scripture. The work was printed at Paris in 1678, had already been approved by a Sorbonne censor, by the superior general of the Oratory (to which Simon belonged), and had been given a royal privilege. In fact, 1300 copies had already been printed (only the title page and dedication were missing), when a copy of the preface and table of contents, distributed as publicity, was brought to the attention of the influential bishop and royal tutor, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet. The latter was so alarmed by the table of contents, which included as the title of the fifth chapter: «Moses cannot be the author of all the books attributed to him», that he intervened with the chancellor to halt the publication. The printed copies were confiscated and destroyed except for about fifteen or twenty and the royal privilege was withdrawn. Richard Simon was expelled from the Oratory.²

One of the copies, however, made its way to England where it was translated into English and published in 1682 with the title *A critical history of the Old Tes-*

1 This essay was originally presented as a lecture for the faculty and students of the specialization «History of Theology» in the Faculty of Theology of the Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, Roma.

2 For the life and work of R. Simon (1638-1712), see J. LE BRUN, «Simon (Richard)», in *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible* 12, Paris 1996, 1353-1383; F.H. GORMAN, JR., «Simon, Richard (1638-1712)», in *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* 2, ed. J.H. Hayes, Nashville 1999, 468-470; H.G. REVENTLOW, *Storia dell'interpretazione biblica. 4. Dall'Illuminismo fino al XX secolo*, tr. E. Gatti, Casale Monferrato 2004, 101-106. For a more comprehensive examination of the interpretation of Simon's work by contemporary and later writers one may now usefully consult: S. MÜLLER, *Kritik und Theologie. Christliche Glaubens- und Schriftthermeneutik nach Richard Simon (1638-1712)* (Münchener Theologische Studien 2, Systematische Abteilung Bd. 66), St. Ottilien 2004.

tament. Thus the phrase «critical history» made its way into English.³ Simon's original French work was soon reprinted in various poorly executed editions at Amsterdam and in a Latin translation in 1681. In 1685 it was reprinted at Rotterdam with a new preface, marginal notes and the author's responses to published criticisms. Simon published two more works with the title «Critical History»: *Histoire critique de la creance & des coùtumes des nations du Levant* (1682),⁴ and *Histoire critique du texte du Nouveau Testament* (1689).⁵ From this time on the major library catalogues show an increasing number of works published with the phrase «Critical History» in the title.

Translations of Simon's works appeared in German beginning in 1713 and later German scholar's including J.D. Michaelis (1765), J.G. Gerder (1780), and J. Semler proclaimed Simon the founder or father of biblical criticism.⁶ Although the work of Richard Simon represents a significant stage in the development of what is now known as historical-critical methodology, Simon was not the first to use the term critical, much less the first to practice criticism.⁷ The terminology deriving from the Greek *krinein*, meaning «to judge», had reappeared in the modern period beginning with the work of Angelo Poliziano, who, in his lecture of 1492 on the *Analytica priora* of Aristotle spoke of those in antiquity called «criticos». In the Lexicon published by Ambrosius Calepinus in 1502 one finds the entry «*Criticus*». By 1580 the word had come to be used as a substantive (*critica, la critique*) by the renowned humanist Joseph Scaliger.⁸

More important, however, than the mere use of the ancient terminology was the actual activity of the early humanists, such as Lorenzo Valla, inspired

3 The word «critical» alone is of course found earlier in English. The earliest examples given by the Oxford English Dictionary are from Shakespeare.

4 R. SIMON, *Histoire critique de la creance et des coùtumes des nations du Levant*, Francfort 1684.

5 R. SIMON, *Histoire critique du texte du Nouveau Testament. Où l'on établit la verité des actes sur lesquels la religion chrétienne est fondée*, Rotterdam 1689.

6 See GORMAN, «Simon, Richard (1638-1712)», 468.

7 Useful overviews of the development of historical-critical methodology may be found in: F. LAPLANCHE, «La marche de la critique biblique d'Érasme à Spinoza», in *Naissance de la méthode critique. Colloque du centenaire de l'École biblique et archéologique française de Jérusalem* (Patrimoines christianisme), Paris 1992, 31-39; K. RÖTTGERS, «Kritik», in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe; historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* 3, Stuttgart 1982, 651-675.

8 For this information see RÖTTGERS, «Kritik», 653-654. On Scaliger's contribution in general, see A. GRAFTON, *Joseph Scaliger. A study in the history of classical scholarship* 1-2, Oxford 1983-1994.

by the study of the ancient languages and texts. The most famous of the early «critiques» was Valla's in 1440 directed at the early medieval document known as the *Donation of Constantine*, which purported to be a text written by the Emperor Constantine granting to Pope Sylvester and his successors temporal sovereignty over the Western part of the Empire. This document had been used as a legal basis for papal claims to temporal sovereignty and its fabrication had entered into the medieval chronicles as an undisputed fact.⁹ Lorenzo Valla may have been inspired in his analysis of this text by the earlier critique directed by Francesco Petrarca (died 1374) at the «false privilege exempting Austria from imperial jurisdiction» (1355).¹⁰ In any case, by means of a lengthy and, for modern taste, excessively polemical analysis, Valla showed the absurdity of the document's claims. The tools Valla used for his devastating analysis of this early medieval forgery were derived from the study of the classical Latin literature, the original basis of humanist culture. Valla demonstrated that the language used and the customs described in the document were in fact anachronistic. For example, certain words and phrases used in the document did not belong to Roman legal terminology in the fourth century.¹¹ Constantine's reference to his crown¹² was likewise anachronistic as was his reference to the four patriarchal sees of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Constantinople.¹³ The latter had not yet been founded and was first given precedence by the Council of Constantinople in 381.

Valla's critique reflected and promoted a new historical awareness relying on the analysis of language and customs. The ability to point out anachronistic use of language presupposed not only a mastery of the ancient literature and the classical language but an awareness of the impermanence and changing character of language, in short, of historical relativism. For Valla, the classical Latin language represented an ideal, whose loss he could lament, and whose various linguistic and stylistic periods he knew well. His precise philological studies

9 See for example the late but very popular chronicle published by the German humanist and physician H. SCHEDEL, *Das buch der Cronicken und Geschichten*, Nürnberg 1493.

10 For the text in English translation, see D.R. KELLEY, *Versions of History from Antiquity to the Enlightenment*, New Haven 1991, 231-236.

11 L. VALLA, *La falsa donazione di Costantino*, Milano 1994, 138-139 (XII.39). The Latin title of the work reads: *De falso credita et ementita constantini donatione*. Valla notes in particular the mistaken use of the term «satrap».

12 VALLA, *La falsa donazione di Costantino*, 157-161 (XV.48-50).

13 VALLA, *La falsa donazione di Costantino*, 144-151 (XIV.43).

carried out in numerous other works on etymology and style enabled him to distinguish the forgery from the authentic. Philology lay at the base of the new historical consciousness and of humanism's awareness of cultural relativism.¹⁴

The humanist search for and study of the ancient texts, which lay at the heart of the Renaissance, proceeded with the awareness that the texts had been corrupted in the process of manuscript transmission. Hence an important part of the humanist project was the editing and restoration of the texts themselves, the procedure that later would be called text criticism. Another work by Lorenzo Valla was instrumental in the eventual development of New Testament text criticism. In 1443 he wrote the *Collatio Novi Testamenti* and in 1449 he took up the work again in what would later be known as the *Adnotationes in Novum Testamentum*, on which he would labor for the rest of his life. In these works he collated Greek and Latin manuscripts and applied the philological method to the correction of the Vulgate, a text hitherto regarded as sacrosanct and itself the ultimate authority for theology. Valla died in 1457, the year after the Bible was first printed, and thus did not live to see his works diffused through the new invention of printing, an invention that was to be decisive for the development of text criticism.¹⁵

In 1504 another humanist, Desiderius Erasmus, discovered a manuscript of Valla's work on the New Testament text in the monastery of Parc at Louvain and had it printed at Paris the following year, giving it the title *Adnotationes in Novum Testamentum*. In this way the work of Valla came to form the basis of Erasmus' own edition of the Greek New Testament and thus the beginning of New Testament textual criticism. This meant a direct challenge to the authority of the Vulgate, which had been the authoritative text for medieval theology. It may be difficult for us, accustomed as we are to accept the authority of the Greek text over that of the Vulgate and to the complexity of textual criticism, to appreciate what a revolution this involved. The pressure exerted by the authority of the Vulgate was sufficient to cause Erasmus, in the third edition of the

14 For the historical significance of Valla's philological work, see in particular the treatment by D.R. KELLEY, «The Sense of History», (= chap. 2) in *Foundations of modern historical scholarship. Language, law, and history in the French Renaissance*, New York 1970, 19-50. For the subsequent history of both Valla's work and the *Donation of Constantine*, see: G.M. VIAN, *La donazione di Costantino*, Bologna 2004.

15 For a more extensive appreciation of the importance of Valla's work for biblical criticism, see H.G. REVENTLOW, *Storia dell'interpretazione biblica* 3, Casale Monferrato 1999. On the effects of the invention of printing, see E.L. EISENSTEIN, *The printing press as an agent of change. Communications and cultural transformations in early-modern Europe* 1, Cambridge 1979.

Greek New Testament, to insert a Greek text for the famous so-called Joannine comma, now clearly acknowledged to be a creation of the Western Latin textual tradition.¹⁶ Nevertheless, it has been argued, a decisive step had been taken in the formation of the modern mentality: the reversal of the relationship to the past. Explicit evidence-based research had been substituted for the medieval *Auctoritates*.¹⁷

Another stage in the development of criticism and a major contribution to the reconstruction of the past is represented by the monumental studies of Joseph Scaliger (†1609), already mentioned as the first to use the word *critica* as a substantive. Scaliger seems to have been the first in the area of text criticism to suspect the existence of archetypes and of families of manuscripts.¹⁸ But perhaps more important was his contribution to the field of historical chronology. The importance ascribed to studies in chronology in the Renaissance is difficult for us to appreciate, as a modern historian of Renaissance historiography has noted.¹⁹ The study of chronology enjoyed enormous prestige among the learned. Scaliger devoted much of his scholarly life to trying to unravel and coordinate the various systems devised for measuring or recording time throughout the ages. His studies of biblical chronology in particular, however, brought him great frustration and led him to conclude that the biblical chronology could not be reconciled with other available data. As a believing Christian, rather than doubt the credibility of the biblical account, he decided that the texts must be corrupt and left his findings unpublished.²⁰

In many ways the more than two centuries of philological and critical textual studies of the Renaissance can be seen to reach a new stage of critical reflection in the ambitious French historical projects of the late seventeenth century, those of Richard Simon and his contemporaries. In the preface to his *Histoire critique* of the Old Testament, Simon sought to explain his use of the word «critical» and insisted that the explanation of the literal sense should be the only object

16 For the history of the dispute over this text, which has lasted until relatively modern times, see B.M. METZGER, *The Text of the New Testament. Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration*, Oxford ²1968, 101-102.

17 LAPLANCHE, «La marche de la critique biblique d'Érasme à Spinoza», 31.

18 LAPLANCHE, «La marche de la critique biblique d'Érasme à Spinoza», 31.

19 A. GRAFTON, *Joseph Scaliger* 2, 6.

20 GRAFTON, *Joseph Scaliger* 2, 728-743. However, he admitted privately to the Vassani: «It's a strange thing, I don't dare to say this. If it was a pagan author, I would speak of it differently» (742).

of critical study. In this he differed from his immediate predecessors such as Grotius and Spinoza, who approached the text with various metaphysical ideas. Simon insisted likewise that only the Hebrew Bible could provide the basis for such study of the text.

This insistence on reading the texts without presuppositions had a parallel in the approach of the great contemporary church historian, Sebastien Le Nain de Tillemont (1637-1698).²¹ Tillemont's goal was to study the history of the church and of the saints – and incidentally the history of the princes and powerful involved in that history – from the point of view of the sources and to search for the truth in the original texts as distinguished from later interpretations. The distinction between a critical reading of the original texts and their received interpretations remains an essential aspect of critical historical investigation.

From what has been said thus far, it should be obvious that the roots of historical critical methodology are not to be found in the late developments of the Enlightenment, as some are still inclined to argue, but rather in the philological and textual studies of the humanists of the Italian Renaissance. Although one finds an anti-philosophical and anti-theological polemic among some of these scholars, notably Valla, it is directed more against the medieval scholastic approach toward authorities, rather than being the fruit of the anti-religious prejudice found among many later figures of the Enlightenment. All of the scholars previously mentioned considered themselves to be believing Christians.

In the eighteenth century, German scholars took up the historical critical study of the Bible and further developed the questions already raised by Richard Simon. More notable, however, for the history of criticism in general and for that of history in particular are the developments represented by such famous works as *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. With these titles of Immanuel Kant the concept of «criticism» has obviously reached the heart of philosophical study. From this time on, the question of the human, or subjective, component of knowledge becomes a clearly acknowledged central philosophical question. This identification of the human filter, along with the development of the empirical sciences, will shape how history comes to be regarded in the nineteenth century.

21 For information regarding Tillemont, see: H. LECLERCQ, «Tillemont», in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* 15, Paris 1953, 2313; H. LECLERCQ, «Historiens du Christianisme», in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* 6, Paris 1924, 2533-2735; G. BARDY, «Tillemont», in *Dictionnaire de la Théologie Catholique* 15, Paris 1946, 1029-1033.

It is not necessary to delve into the philosophical questions in detail to see that the question of the subjective contribution to historical knowledge would eventually have to be addressed. Modern critical reflection on the nature of historical knowledge is often said to begin with Vico.²² Many other historians and philosophers have contributed to reflection on this subject including notably Wilhelm Dilthey, whose great project of a *Kritik der historischen Vernunft*, obviously inspired by Kant's titles, was never realized. Other names include Heussi, Meinecke, Becker, Collingwood, and Marrou. The history of historiography, a more recent development, has also contributed to our awareness of the nature of historical writing and knowledge.²³ In the past 150 years, critical reflection on the nature of and the components of historical knowledge has passed through many phases. These include the question of the essential differences between the natural sciences and the social sciences, criticism of the empirical approach, the question of the possibility of discovering laws, patterns, or meaning in history, the possibility of objective historical knowledge, the question of whether history is an art or a science and what is the difference between history and art, the role of philosophical presuppositions and prejudices on the part of the historian, and many others too numerous to list here.²⁴

Up to this point, as the critical reader will have noted, we have used the words «history» and «historical» rather loosely without attempting to define them. This in fact reflects the common usage of the terms to refer either to the past itself or to the various attempts at its reconstruction. Yet the distinction between the human past itself and the effort to reconstruct it is crucial for understanding the nature of historical knowledge and for historical criticism. One sometimes hears the figure of speech used: «History shows us» or «history instructs us», a personification of course, but a dangerous one if taken seriously and uncritically, because it creates the illusion that history has an objective existence apart from the human (subjective) attempts to construct it. History does not instruct us, but human beings, both learned and unlearned ones, may attempt to instruct us using the materials of history. History has been used throughout its history

22 M.C. D'ARCY, *The Meaning and Matter of History. A Christian View*, New York 1959.

23 See for example: E. BREISACH, *Historiography. Ancient, Medieval and Modern*, Chicago 1994; D.R. KELLEY, *Faces of History: historical inquiry from Herodotus to Herder*, New Haven 1998; D.R. KELLEY, *Fortunes of History. Historical inquiry from Herder to Huizinga*, New Haven 2003.

24 A very useful summary and discussion of these questions may be found in B.F. LONERGAN, «History and Historians», in *Method in Theology*, New York 1973, 197-234.

for the purpose of moral or political instruction, and its usefulness has often been justified from this perspective.²⁵

The human past is not immediately accessible. We cannot pull it up on a computer screen. We have no direct access to «what really happened», to use the famous phrase of Leopold von Ranke, which has been called the *Ding an sich* of the historian.²⁶ We have only the traces left behind, the testimony of witnesses, first, second or third hand, the ruins of dead cities, tens of thousands of documents in dead languages. With these the historian must work to construct his picture, his narrative of the human past. With these he conducts his «investigation», for this is the original meaning of the word history, or one of the meanings, as used by Herodotus and other ancient writers.²⁷ To organize these materials he makes use of many concepts and ideas or categories, many of which he may have inherited, and some of which he may have invented or created himself. Among these some of the most obvious are the terms used to divide chronologically different periods of the human past, such as «Ancient History», the «Middle Ages», the «Renaissance», and «Modernity». Others may denote intellectual movements such as «Idealism», «Romanticism», «Modernism». All such terms represent a certain level of abstraction from the historical data, some more than others. All form part of the human subjective contribution to historical knowledge. All such ideas and concepts have their own history, some of which await writing, and all are in need of critical historical evaluation. All reflect particular temporal or ideological (intellectual positions) points of view. Some notable projects of historical critical evaluation at this level have already been carried out, such as the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*.²⁸

It is to this level of criticism, what might be called an intermediate and practical level, in the reconstruction of the past, at least that part of the past called the history of Christian theology, that I would like to turn now. Unfortunately the limitations of space prevent us from digressing on the boundaries of the con-

25 KELLEY, *Fortunes*, 344 et passim.

26 KELLEY, *Fortunes*, 344.

27 R. KOSELLECK, «Geschichte, Historie», in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* 2, Stuttgart 1979, 593-717.

28 O. BRUNNER - R. KOSELLECK - W. CONZE, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* 1-7, Stuttgart 1972-1997. For earlier developments in the history of ideas, see: A.O. LOVEJOY, «Reflections on the History of Ideas», *Journal of the History of Ideas* 1 (1940) 3-23, and *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* 1-5, ed. P. Wiener, New York 1973-1974.

cepts «theology» and «history of theology», an exercise that is theoretically necessary in order to reveal some of the presuppositions of this inquiry. Nevertheless, I would like to mention and reflect critically on certain terms and ideas that are commonly used in theology and in the history of theology. Christian theology, especially in the modern period, tends to be grounded in or seeks to ground its concepts in its own history. Sometimes this produces concepts that will not resist critical evaluation.

THE CONCEPT OF «TYPOLOGY»

A concrete case of this is the notion of «typology», which has generated a considerable body of literature in the last seventy years. In 1939 Leonhard Goppelt published a book entitled: *TYPOS. The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, in which he attempted to define «typology» and «allegory» as mutually exclusive phenomena. According to Goppelt, only historical facts are material for typological interpretation. Things are interpreted typologically «only if they are considered to be divinely ordained representations or types of future realities that will be greater and even more complete».²⁹ On the contrary, «neither facts nor the literal sense of a passage taken as a whole is material for allegorical interpretation, but the ideas and phrases are». When Goppelt came to treat the passage where Paul describes the story of Sarah and Hagar as an allegory (Gal 4:24), he was forced by his own logic to declare that Paul's «exposition was entirely confined to a typological exposition of the historical facts».³⁰ The interpretation, he states, «is not allegorical, in the proper sense of the word; rather, it is typological throughout».³¹ Paul, it would seem, did not understand the meaning of the words he was using. Goppelt published numerous other articles on this distinction, including some in influential reference works such as *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* and the *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, and his book «Typos» was published in English translation in 1982, a sign of its enduring or increasing influence, at least in certain circles.³²

29 L. GOPPELT, *TYPOS. The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, tr. D.H. Madwig, Grand Rapids 1983, 18.

30 GOPPELT, *TYPOS*, 139.

31 GOPPELT, *TYPOS*, 140.

32 L. GOPPELT, «τύπος», in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* 8, Stuttgart 1969, 246-260; L. GOPPELT, «Allegorie», in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* 1, Tübingen 1957, 238-240.

Under the influence of Goppelt, this sharp distinction between typology and allegory was promoted in Catholic circles and carried over into the study of patristic exegesis, above all by Jean Daniélou. Examining the interpretation of Isaac in patristic authors, for example, Daniélou observed the influence of Philo on writers such as Origen and Ambrose, and, although he noted how they had given a Christian turn to the stream of interpretation coming from Philo, he observed that this leads to an approach which finds a spiritual sense in every text of Scripture. This, he stated, «is quite contrary to the true spirit of typology, which is content to find types of the New Testament only in those events in which the divine action outlines as it were what will later receive its fulfillment in Christ».³³ It was inevitable that the two exegetical traditions of Alexandria and Antioch would become involved in this interpretation. Daniélou saw the Antiochean tradition as stemming from the Jewish exegetical tradition rather than the pagan Hellenistic one that would have inspired the Alexandrians.³⁴

The sharp distinction of allegory and typology was criticised already in 1947 by Henri de Lubac, who argued that the distinction was neither scriptural nor traditional and that early Christian authors did not distinguish them.³⁵ He also asserted that the Antiochean distinction between typos and allegory could not be taken as the basis for a modern reading of the history of ancient exegesis. This criticism did not halt the progress of the idea of typology once it had been introduced. Books by Lampe and Hanson continued the interpretation introduced by Goppelt. Hanson in particular is severe in his judgement on Origen's use of allegory, accusing him of «extravagance», «theological fantasy», and a «spiritualizing exposition which has no legitimate ground in historical real-

33 J. DANIELOU, *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, Westminster, MD 1960, 149. The original French edition was published in 1950. The number of references to Goppelt's book shows clearly its influence.

34 The origins of the Antiochean exegetical tradition remain somewhat obscure, but few take seriously a Jewish origin. For various views see: C. SCHÄUBLIN, *Untersuchungen zu Methode und Herkunft der antiochenischen Exegese* (Theophaneia 23), Köln-Bonn 1974; M. SIMONETTI, *Lettera e/o Allegoria. Un contributo alla storia dell'esegesi patristica*, Roma 1985; G. RINALDI, «Diodoro di Tarso, Antiochia e le ragioni della polemica antiallegorista», *Augustinianum* 33 (1993), 407-430; A. VICIANO, «Das formale Verfahren der antiochenischen Schriftauslegung: ein Forschungsüberblick», in *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, Ergänzungsband* 23 (1996) 370-405; F. YOUNG, «The Fourth Century Reaction against Allegory», in *Studia Patristica* 30, Leuven 1997, 120-128; R.C. HILL, *Reading the Old Testament in Antioch* (Bible in Ancient Christianity 5), Leiden 2005.

35 H. DE LUBAC, «Typologie et allegorisme», *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 34 (1947) 180-226.

ity». According to him, Origen's underestimation of historicity is the basis of the problem.³⁶ Not surprisingly, he had earlier accused Philo of not wanting to take history seriously.³⁷

More recent studies of ancient exegesis, including those by Crouzel, Pépin, Louth, Simonetti, Dawson, and Clark, have cast doubt on the concept of typology and whether or not it constitutes a procedure essentially different from allegory.³⁸ Nevertheless, the notion of «typology» seems to have entered permanently into the vocabulary used to describe the history of interpretation and can now be found in the indices of all recent histories of patristic exegesis. A full history of this concept has yet to be written, but the following observations may be made. First of all, the very fact that the word «typology» cannot be found in all of ancient literature, Greek or Latin, should be a cause for suspicion for the historical critic. In addition, it is not possible even to find a clear distinction in the use of the Greek words «typos» and «allegoria» before the time of Diodorus of Tarsus, who did in fact insist on an essential difference between what he calls «Greek» allegory and the use of the term by Paul. Diodorus attempted to restrict the meaning of the word «allegory» to moral or cosmological allegory where the historical referent is not seen as essential. According to him, what Paul is really doing is not allegory but «theoria».³⁹ It would be highly anachronistic to read this distinction back into a period three hundred years earlier and yet this is precisely what appears to have occurred and to have been uncritically accepted by many modern writers. The real difference, it may be argued, is not one of procedure (allegory), but one of reference or hermeneutical key. From this point of view typology would at best be a subspecies of allegory.⁴⁰ For Philo, the key to interpreting Moses was the Greek philosophical tradition because

36 R.P.C. HANSON, *Allegory and Event. A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture*, London 1959, 283.

37 R.P.C. HANSON, *Allegory and Event*, 83.

38 H. CROUZEL, «La distinction de la "typologie" et de l'"allegorie"», *Bulletin de la littérature ecclésiastique* 65 (1964) 161-174; J. PÉPIN, *Mythe et Allégorie. Les origines grecques et les contestations judéo-chrétiennes* (Études Augustiniennes), Paris 1976, 247-275; A. LE BOULLUEC, «De Paul à Origène: continuité ou divergence?», in *Alexandrie Antique et Chrétienne. Clément et Origène* (Études Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité 178), ed. C.G. Conticello, Paris 2006, 415-435; P.W. MARTENS, «Revisiting the Allegory/Typology Distinction: The Case of Origen», *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16 (2008) 283-317.

39 K. FROELICH, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*, Philadelphia 1984, 87-89.

40 D. DAWSON, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria*, Berkeley 1992, 16, «... typology is understood to be simply one species of allegory; the historical practice of giving texts other meanings according to certain "rules" (typology). On this

he saw Moses as king and philosopher (a concept obviously borrowed from Plato), temporally antecedent to the Greek philosophers and from whom they had borrowed. For Paul, the key to interpreting Moses is Jesus Christ, although Paul is not immune to the temptation of moralising allegory as 1 Cor 9:8-10 shows. The most recent entry for «Typologie» in the *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* suggests that the concept of «typology» was developed in the context of eighteenth century protestant theology and belongs to the category of «biblical theology».⁴¹ In fact, since at least the time of Luther there has prevailed in the west a very negative attitude toward the use of allegorical interpretation.⁴² This has led to attempts to exculpate Paul from the fault of allegorical interpretation by distinguishing between typological interpretation and allegorical interpretation. Paul would have engaged in the former, which consists in seeing a correspondence between historical facts and figures of the Old Testament and their fulfillment in the Christ-event.

What may we conclude from the examination of this concept? The notion of typology may be anachronistic and therefore distorting when applied to ancient exegesis, but it may be important for understanding aspects of modern theology. It appears to be related to some other ideas, historical and theological, which have had considerable currency in modern times, such as the notion that linear history is a Judeo-Christian innovation in contrast to the supposed pagan cyclical view of history and the notion that the difference between the Alexandrian and Antiochean schools of thought lay chiefly in an attitude toward history and the historical sense of the Scriptures. These notions have also been sharply contested in recent times.⁴³

view, typology is simply a certain kind of allegorical reading promoted as nonallegorical for specific theological and rhetorical reasons».

41 C. DOHMEN - E. DIRSCHERL, «Typologie», in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* 10, Freiburg ²2001, 321-323. For the possible connection between the notion of «typology» and that of «salvation history», see also: R.W. YARBOROUGH, *The Salvation History Fallacy? Reassessing the History of New Testament Theology* (History of Biblical Interpretation 2), Leiden 2004, 401.

42 See W. KÜMMEL, *The New Testament. The History of the Investigation of its Problems*, New York 1972, 22-23.

43 The chief proponent of this view was Hanson (see note 36 above), who, however, did not define his notion of history, and seems to have projected a modern historical-critical notion back into the fourth century. It is highly anachronistic to judge Origen by modern notions of history rather than seeking to understand him in terms of his own intellectual world. See now P.W. MARTIN, *Origen and Scripture. The Contours of the Exegetical Life* (Oxford Early Christian Studies), Oxford 2012, 8-9.

THE CONCEPT OF «SALVATION HISTORY»

Another related idea is the notion of salvation history, which began its career as «Heilsgeschichte» with the publication of J.C.K. von Hofmann's *Weissagung und Erfüllung* (1841-44).⁴⁴ From the point of view of the increasing awareness of the historically conditioned nature of the concepts used to organize and understand historical and theological material, it is interesting to compare the articles on «Heilsgeschichte» in the third and fourth editions of *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. The former⁴⁵ begins simply with a description of the concept, examines its biblical foundations and then traces its presence in the history of theology in Irenaeus, Augustine, Joachim of Fiore, Coccejus, etc. The fourth edition⁴⁶ includes instead a history of the «concept» beginning with von Hofmann and notes moreover that the presupposition for the introduction of the concept lies in the development of the notion of history itself in the second half of the 18th century (as a generally forward-moving meaningful process). A similar development may be observed in the second and third editions of the *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*.⁴⁷

Von Hofmann's approach combined three features of biblical faith, which have been taken up by three different schools of theology.⁴⁸ His emphasis on the actual events of the history of Israel and the life of Christ as forming a single purposeful sequence of events is reflected in the publications of scholars such as G.E. Wright⁴⁹, O. Cullmann⁵⁰ and G.E. Ladd.⁵¹

44 See J.W. ROGERSON, «Hofmann, Johann Christian Konrad von», in *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. J.H. Hayes, Nashville 1999, 523-514.

45 H. OTT, «Heilsgeschichte», in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* 3, ed. K. Galling, Tübingen 1957-1965, 187-189. This methodology, seeking to legitimate an idea by finding it in Scripture and patristic literature, without, however, examining its provenance, was very common in the earlier part of the last century.

46 F. MILDENBERGER, «Heilsgeschichte», in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft* 3, ed. H.D. Betz, Tübingen 1998-2001, 1584-1586.

47 R. SCHNACKENBURG - K.G. STECK - A. DARLAPP, «Heilsgeschichte», in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* 5, ed. J. HÖFER - K. RAHNER, Freiburg 1960, 148-157; W. FÜRST, «Heilsgeschichte», in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, ed. W. Kasper, Freiburg 1995, 1336-1344.

48 J. GOLDINGAY, «Salvation History», in *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. R.J. Coggins - J.L. Houlden, London 1990, 606-607.

49 G.E. WRIGHT, *God Who Acts*, London 1952.

50 O. CULLMANN, *Salvation in History*, New York 1967.

51 G.E. LADD, *A Theology of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids, Mich. 1974.

A second aspect of von Hofmann's approach, his stress on the individual's personal appropriation of the salvation events, is reflected in the thoughts of R. Bultmann in his contributions to *Essays on Old Testament Interpretation/Hermeneutics*⁵² and to *The Old Testament and Christian Faith* (ed. B.W. Anderson, 1964).⁵³ The personal appropriation is the journey from promise or law to the experience of fulfillment or gospel.

A third aspect of the «model» (= «Salvation History») is represented in the work of G. von Rad,⁵⁴ who stressed the Bible as the history of the *proclamation* of salvation. Von Rad, more aware than von Hofmann of the difficulty of establishing the events that lie behind the biblical narrative, proposed a theology of what Israel said about God's deeds rather than a study of the significance of the deeds themselves.

In Roman Catholic theology, «Salvation History» became a key concept only after the middle of the twentieth century due in large part to renewed studies in biblical theology and patristics.⁵⁵ In the first phase (until Vatican II) Catholic theology was absorbed with taking over concepts from biblical theology. The constitutions *Dei Verbum* (on Revelation) and *Lumen Gentium* (On the Church) manifest the results of the «Salvation History» approach, but do not yet try to come to terms with profane and universal history. In the many volume work on dogmatic theology *Mysterium Salutis* (1965-), subtitled *Grundriss Heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik*, «Salvation History» is the overarching principle of organization.⁵⁶ The term has even entered into the vocabulary of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: §332, 430, 280.

In Catholic circles above all the concept of «Salvation History» has been employed extensively in the area of liturgy.⁵⁷ This has been seen as a work of «recuperation» in two phases, the first through the work of Odo Casel (1886-1948), and second through the promulgation of the constitution *Sacrosanctum*

52 *Essays on Old Testament Interpretation/Hermeneutics*, ed. C. Westermann, Richmond 1963.

53 *The Old Testament and Christian Faith*, ed. B.W. Anderson, London 1964.

54 G. VON RAD, *Old Testament Theology* 1-2, Edinburgh 1962-1964.

55 D. WIEDERKEHR, «Heilsgeschichte», in *Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon. Internationale theologische Enzyklopädie*, ed. E. Fahlbusch et al., Göttingen 1989, 460-468.

56 C. VAGAGGINI, «Storia della salvezza», in *Nuovo Dizionario di Teologia*, Milano 1988; L. DATTRINO, «Salvezza (storia della)», in *Dizionario di scienze storiche*, ed. A. Burguière, Cinisello Balsamo 1992, 716-728.

57 A. PISTOIA, «Storia della Salvezza», in *Liturgia*, ed. D. Sartore - A.M. Triacca - C. Ciben, Cinisello Balsamo 2001, 1972-1986.

Concilium (1963) of Vatican II, in which «revelation as salvation history» became the keystone of the entire liturgy.⁵⁸ In this perspective the liturgy is perceived as the celebration of the history of salvation in symbolic actions.

For both Catholics and Protestants the «hermeneutic ghetto»⁵⁹ of a «Salvation History» oriented dogmatic theology was broken out of by two authors writing contemporaneously, K. Rahner (1976) and W. Pannenberg (1975),⁶⁰ both of whom attempted to deal with the problems of general and particular «Salvation History» or the relationship between the biblically oriented concept and universal history.

It has been observed that the concept has been introduced into both Protestant and Catholic theology in the sense of a counter idea in opposition to the dominance of a «truth in Revelation» theology, which had lost contact with the concrete history of the relationship between God and the world.⁶¹ The expressly «Salvation History» perspective is oriented then toward recovering that which is thought to have been lost.

The diverse uses for which the model has been employed have also generated confusion and have led to considerable criticism of the concept. In fact it has been criticised from the start.⁶² It has been faulted for being unreflectively supernaturalist, for oversimplifying the nature of Scripture, for falsifying the nature of Israel's distinctiveness, for understating the significance of word in relation to event in biblical faith, and for employing an idiosyncratic definition of history and a different conception of history from that found in the Bible.⁶³ Some have suggested that the model should be abandoned altogether.⁶⁴

The concept of «Salvation History» has also been treated as a topic of, or in the context of, «Biblical Theology» and its history and fortunes are related to

58 S. MARSILI, «La teologia della liturgia nel Vaticano II», in *La liturgia momento nella storia della salvezza* (Anàmnese 1), Torino 1974.

59 D. WIEDERKEHR, «Heilsgeschichte», in *Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon. Internationale theologische Enzyklopädie*, ed. E. Fahlbusch et al., Göttingen 1989, 465.

60 K. RAHNER, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, Freiburg 1976, 143-177; W. PANNENBERG, *Glaube und Wirklichkeit*, München 1975, 113-175.

61 WIEDERKEHR, «Heilsgeschichte», 461.

62 A. WEISER - O. ENGELS - W. FÜRST, «Heilsgeschichte», in *Lexicon für Theologie und Kirche*, ed. W. Kasper, Freiburg³ 1995, 1336-1344.

63 WIEDERKEHR, «Heilsgeschichte», 465-466; J. GOLDINGAY, «Salvation History», 607.

64 F. HESSE, *Abschied von der Heilsgeschichte*, Zürich 1971; J.L. MCKENZIE, *A Theology of the Old Testament*, Garden City, N.Y. 1974.

the history of the latter concept.⁶⁵ Although it has been asserted that the concept «Salvation History» is a modern term for ancient content, precisely this affirmation continues to be called in question, since the term as used by modern writers does not correspond to specific ancient terminology or ideas, notably that of «oikonomia».⁶⁶ The notion of salvation history was in fact born in modern times as a theological organizing principle, but if applied to the history of ancient theology, it runs the risk of increasing misunderstanding. Although it is primarily a theological concept, it can deform the way history is viewed from a Christian perspective.

IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS HETERODOXY

Another idea that has shaped the way the history of theology is told is that in the beginning there was no such thing as orthodoxy, but only heterodoxy. This idea was introduced by Walter Bauer in his well-known book, *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum*, published in 1934. In this vision, orthodoxy would have been imposed gradually by authority. Although this basic thesis has been sharply criticised and refuted, it still serves as the basis or fundamental thesis for many research projects. The English translation was published in 1971 and through it the Bauer hypothesis has gained great popularity in the English speaking world, especially in North America.⁶⁷ Through the publications of Pagels and Ehrman, the Bauer hypothesis has gained popularity in the mainstream media, which, needless to say, are not interested in the meticulously detailed refutations of serious scholars over many years. It has even been used to interpret the Nag Hammadi manuscripts (a heterogenous fourth century collection of Gnostic and other writings in Coptic found in Egypt in 1945) and to locate them in the context of Pachomian monasteries, suggesting that the monks were

65 H.G. REVENTLOW, «Theology (Biblical), History of», in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 6, ed. D.N. Freedman, New York 1992, 483-505, especially pp. 497-498 for the notion of Salvation History; J. BARR, *The Concept of Biblical Theology. An Old Testament Perspective*, London 1999.

66 WIEDERKEHR, «Heilsgeschichte», 460; G. RICHTER, *Oikonomia. Der Gebrauch des Wortes Oikonomia im Neuen Testament, bei den Kirchenvätern und in der theologischen Literatur bis ins 20. Jahrhundert* (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 90), Berlin 2005, especially 677-680.

67 W. BAUER, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, Minneapolis 1971; A.J. KÖSTENBERGER - M. J. KRUGER, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy*, Wheaton, Il. 2010.

not fully orthodox in the fourth century.⁶⁸ More recently the Bauer hypothesis has been subjected to a penetrating analysis as a projection of liberal Protestant views of the the early twentieth century.⁶⁹

The critical historian is inevitably suspicious when he sees ideas, whether theological or historical, suddenly enter into currency and rapidly become very popular. Neither historical writing nor theology is immune to fashion and sometimes ideas seem to spread like viruses, biological or electronic. But it is not only new ideas that need to be subjected to criticism, but also ones that have been used for many centuries, such as the notions of Semipelagianism⁷⁰ or Monophysitism,⁷¹ both of which have been criticised in more recent research as being inaccurate or misleading designations.

From what has been said, it will be apparent that one important aspect of the history of theology must be the history of concepts used to organize the reconstruction of the past. These guiding ideas need critical evaluation. It is not easy to escape anachronism, which is built into the knowing process. We inevitably and unconsciously view the past with our ideas, our language and the meanings we have given to words, regardless of what meanings they may have had in the past. Only unstinting critical vigilance can reduce an anachronistic reading of past events and ideas as we try to reconstruct and understand them. In this way critical history can also be an instrument for the theologian (who is not necessarily a different person from the historian), for it helps him to understand the origin and metamorphoses of the concepts that he uses.

68 For the influence of the Bauer hypothesis in North America and the various critiques, see KÖSTENBERGER - KRUGER, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy*, 26-40. For the Nag Hammadi documents, see A. KHOSROYEV, *Die Bibliothek von Nag Hammadi. Einige Probleme des Christentums in Ägypten während der ersten Jahrhunderte* (Arbeiten zum spätantiken und koptischen Ägypten 7), Altenberge 1995.

69 C. MARKSCHIES, *Kaiserzeitliche christliche Theologie und ihre Institutionen. Prolegomena zu einer Geschichte der antiken christlichen Theologie*, Tübingen 2007, 337-357.

70 For a recent analysis of this concept, see: D. OGLIARI, *Gratia et certamen. The Relationship between Grace and Free Will in the Discussion of Augustine with the So-called Semipelagians* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 169), Leuven 2004, 5-10 et passim.

71 The difficulty with the term, which has been used until very recently to designate those who rejected the Council of Chalcedon, is that it was born of the polemic of the fifth century as a term to designate the non-Chalcedonians by the adherents of Chalcedon. It was not part of the non-Chalcedonian terminology or of their great authority, Cyril of Alexandria, who had used instead the term «miaphysis» (a single nature).

A critical history of theology, to conclude with the deliberately provocative title of this lecture, is never finished. It is rather an activity that must be carried out continuously, an activity in which all the levels of «criticism» remain necessary. Philological criticism, with which we began, is not surpassed by the history of ideas but remains an integral part of historical criticism. It is essential for evaluating an idea used to reconstruct history such as «typology». Finally, it may be useful to note that history, the reconstruction of the human past, is a collective enterprise, diachronically and synchronically. We never begin again from the beginning, but always with the inheritance from the past.

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